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A
SUMMER TOUR IN RUSSIA

BY
ANTONIO GALLENGA,
AUTHOR OF "SOUTH AMERICA," ETC.



LONDON:
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PREFACE.

THERE is no deficiency of good books on Russia. There is an excellent one by Mr. Mackenzie Wallace, which was valued by the late Emperor Alexander II. as "the best that ever was or ever could be written." And I confess that, had I read Mr. Wallace's two volumes before I set out on my last year's tour, I might have felt tempted to give up the task as uncalled for and unprofitable, and should not now come before the public with what may be deemed a new work on an old subject.

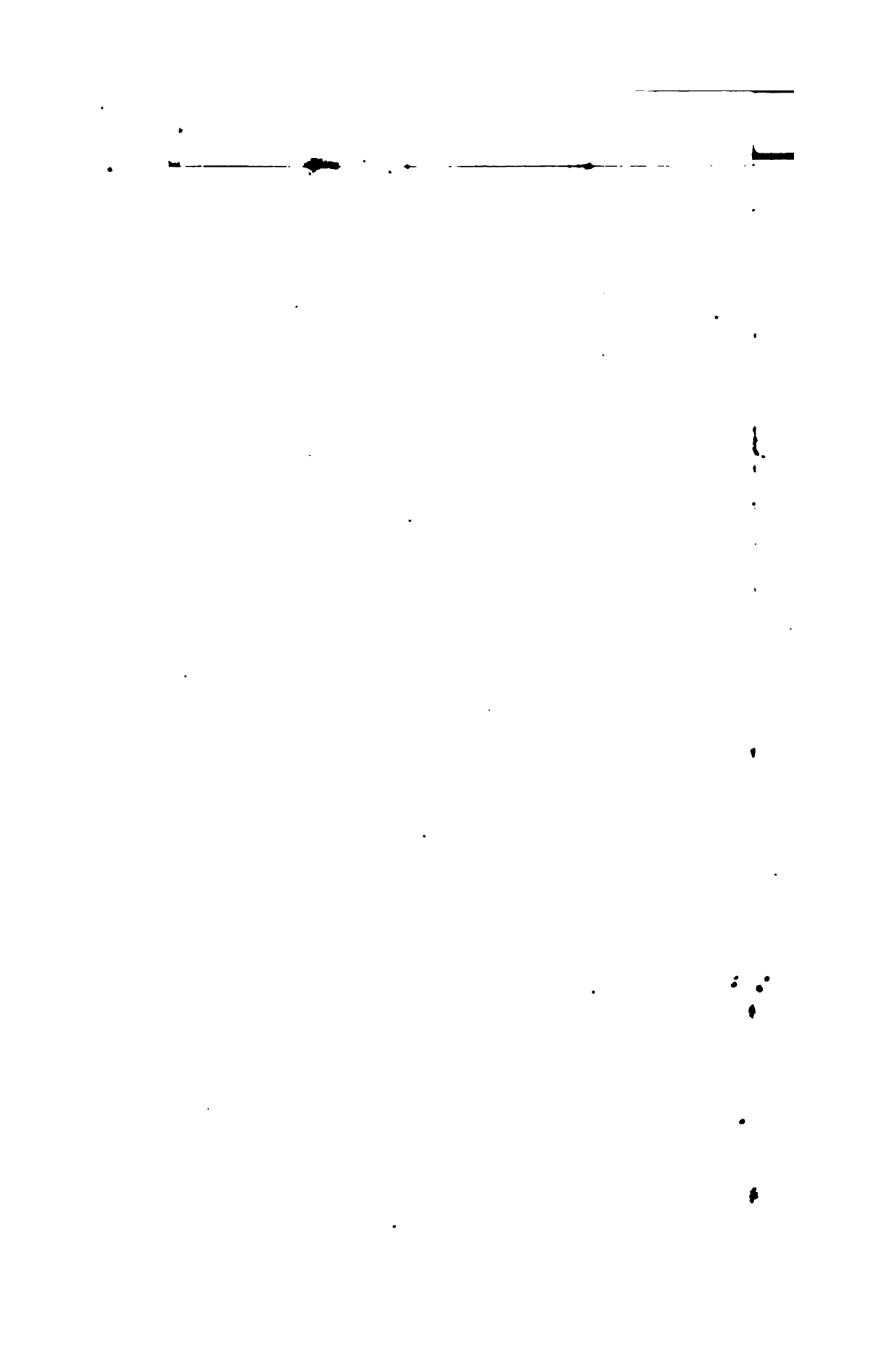
But in reality, though books may grow old, subjects are ever fresh.

Mr. Wallace's "Russia" is the Russia of ten years since. Within ten years, nay, within the last twelvemonth, the great Northern Empire has gone through a crisis of which it would then have been as difficult to foresee the causes as it is now to calculate the consequences.

Mr. Wallace has nobly toiled six years to illustrate the recent history of a nation's life. My object was not to write Mr. Wallace's narrative over again, but only to add one page to it.

In one respect, I think, I was actuated by the same motive that prompted Mr. Wallace. I wished to pour oil on the angry waves of the interminable discussion between *Russophiles* and *Russophobes*. It should be a writer's ambition to place himself above the passions of party strife. One should look upon Russia neither with Whig nor Tory prejudice. The subject affects other interests besides those of the men in power or of their opponents. The subject concerns England.

Between England and Russia there is a vital cause of antagonism; so there was, not many years ago, between England and France; so there may be, a few years hence, between England and Germany. It is England's right and duty to hold her own against the world. And if that tendency to the "agglomeration of smaller states into great empires," which the late Emperor Napoleon described as "characteristic of the present age,"





A SUMMER TOUR IN RUSSIA.

CHAPTER I.

TRAVELLING IN RUSSIA.

First Impressions—Vastness of the Russian Empire—Means of Communication—Russian Rivers—Russian Railways—Old and New Ways of Travelling—Good and Bad of Russian Railways—Hotels and Post-horses—Advantages and Drawbacks of Russian Travelling.

On the 27th of June, 1881, I set out from Paris, bound on a summer tour into Russia. I travelled *viâ* Cologne and Berlin, crossed the frontier at Vierzbolow, or Wirzallen, and arrived at St. Petersburg on the 1st of July.

The Police and Custom-House authorities behaved with uncommon civility, spared us all unnecessary annoyance, and even seemed purposely to overlook the books on Russia in various languages, with which one of my portmanteaus was crammed, and some of which, as notoriously unfriendly to the country and its Government, I had been assured I should never be able to smuggle through.

It is also mere justice to state, that I scarcely knew any country on the Continent in which a traveller's movements are in ordinary times less interfered with than in Russia. The landlord of every hotel where I put up simply asked for my passport on my arrival, and gave it back on my departure, with the *visa* of the police, for which a trifle of 50 kopeks (about 1s. 3d.) was charged, and which rid me of all further molestation or imposition. And I may add, that in every other respect the police in Russia, however watchful and omnipresent they may be, seemed to me by no means vexatious or intrusive.

This was my first visit to St. Petersburg; the first time I set foot on any ground in the Czar's dominions; and I confess, as I passed station after station, and looked about me with that interest which entirely new scenes are apt to inspire, I went through a variety of moods, among which a vague, unaccountable sadness predominated.

One cannot enter Russia without being impressed with the enormity of its size. "A large state!" I thought—"the largest of all compact states;" only second to our own empire of Great Britain and Ireland, with all its colonies and possessions put together; so big a state that, from the frontier station at Wirballen to the St. Petersburg terminus, I had travelled a distance of 560 miles, considerably exceeding that between London

and Edinburgh, and yet this first stage of my journey of a whole night and day had only brought me to the capital, which lies in a corner of the Empire.

To state simply that this Empire of all the Russias has, or had before the latest conquests, an area of nearly 22,000,000 square kilometres may convey no distinct meaning; but a glance at the map will satisfy us that the surface of the smaller half of this Empire—European Russia—is considerably larger than all the rest of Europe taken together, while the other half—Siberia, with the Central Asian provinces—is not far from covering one-third of the Asiatic continent.

And the Rev. Henry Lansdell, in his five months' journey from the Thames to the mouth of the Amoor, all across the Czar's territory, tells us that he went over 2600 miles by rail, 5700 miles by steam, and 3000 by horses; or, altogether, 11,300 miles almost in a straight line.

A big state, indeed; and so far as a man may take pride in the mere bigness of his country, a Russian has ample reason to be proud. "And yet, he is not happy." A foreign visitor feels it on his first arrival: for it is often, for a state as for a man, a great inconvenience to be gigantic. A lofty stature, a stately frame, have for a man most valuable advantages—who knows it not? Mere height enables one to look over the heads of a crowd; it invests him with an instinctive sense of

dignity and an air of command that the under-sized fully appreciate. But one can hardly bethink oneself of a more ludicrous object than that giant "ever so far above six foot six," whom I often saw doubling himself up, and drawing in his long legs to get into his lady's miniature brougham. Very tall men are seldom well-proportioned or robust; and in war they offer too easy a target to those wicked breech-loaders of modern construction, within reach of which even a hero can hardly think that he can make himself small enough.

In the same manner Russia is made unwieldy by her very bulk. She has to struggle with her prodigious length and breadth, and must do it at greater disadvantage than other large states.

In the Western Continent—for instance, in the United States, the Brazils, and the Republics of South America—man was powerfully aided in his fight against enormous distances by the length of navigable water-courses—the Mississippi, the St. Lawrence, the Amazon, the San Francisco, the Plate, the Parana, the Uruguay—even before he could help himself by his railways.

Russia has, indeed, very great rivers of her own to boast of, both in Asia and in Europe: on the north the Niemen, the Düna, the Neva, the Onega, the Dvina, the Obi, the Yenessei, the Lena; on the south the Ural, the Volga, the Don, the Dnieper, Bug, and Dniester; and all, or nearly all, her streams were, by

the providence of Peter the Great, joined by canals into one vast system of land navigation. But what avails it if they all empty themselves either into the White or Arctic Sea, or the Baltic, or into the Caspian, the Sea of Azoff, and the Euxine, all of them either frozen for several months in the year, or land-locked, or closed by straits in alien hands against Russian enterprise and expansion?

With respect to railways, it was Russia's misfortune to go late to work about their construction; and even what she has achieved during the 20 years between the Crimean and the later Turkish wars (1856—1876) scarcely amounts now to 14,000 miles, to which, after the Peace of Berlin, she is barely adding 700 miles yearly—a striking contrast to other large states, as, for instance, to the United States of North America, which has a net of railways of 95,000 miles, with an average annual addition of 11,000 miles.

Add to this that, if we can trust official information, the proceeds of the Russian railways have fallen to little more than half what they were in former years—a clear evidence of great public distress; and the Government expenses for the guaranteed interest of existing lines have been rapidly rising, till they have this year reached the sum of 53,000,000 roubles, leaving but little of the money usually allowed for new constructions.

The backwardness of Russia in her endeavours to

annihilate space by rapid and easy means of locomotion cannot be without grave consequences for her commercial and social, as well as financial and political, interests. It crippled her in her warlike operations against the Western Allies besieging Sebastopol in 1855, and it enables America to be beforhand with her in the corn-markets of England and Western Europe. It is lost ground for her in the battle of life, in her incessant struggle against that geographical position which from the beginning doomed her to seclusion from the civilized world—a struggle, the evidence of which may be read in every page of the country's history, and may be followed in every shift of its Government's policy.

Doubtless, if there is a country in the world for whose especial benefit railways may be said to have been invented, that country is decidedly Russia. From St. Petersburg to Moscow the distance is 604 versts, or about 400 English miles, and the night train travels over it in fifteen hours, or at the rate of 26 miles an hour, reckoning stoppages, which is considered fair average speed on the Continent, and which, I believe, is never attained on any other Russian line. In posting times, all that horse-flesh, by the most strenuous exertions, had been made to achieve was the conveyance of the imperial mails between the two cities in five days and five nights, or 120 hours, the rate being three and a half miles an hour.

The gain in time was perhaps greater in this than in any other country ; but in no other country has speed, which is after all the only real advantage of railway travelling, been less counterbalanced by its undeniable drawbacks.

In England, for instance, railways have robbed us of all the charms of the road—the shady park, the breezy common ; at every stage the crowding villagers, the chaff of the driver, the quips and cranks of the hostler, the drolleries of “ Boots,” the graces of the bar-maid ; the ingle-nook of the wayside inn, the foaming ale of the stirrup cup. In France and Italy we have lost the sight of the hundred minor towns ; their main squares, with old cathedrals and town-halls, the luscious fruit on the market-stalls ; the lively faces, the quaint costumes, the sharp conceits and brisk repartees with which the buyers and sellers enlivened their trading transactions.

We felt then that we were travelling through the life of the country. All we enjoy at the present day is the blank, dead wall, the thronged platform of the station, the piles of luggage, the engine-shriek, the stale sandwich, the hurry-skurry, the hustling and bustling, the sour looks of fellow-passengers evidently more thankful for our room than our company ; and from station to station two hours' imprisonment, boxed up, locked up at the guard's discretion, the express tearing away, deaf to our sufferings or dangers, cooped up with

bears or bores, even if we are fortunate enough to escape a *tête-à-tête* with a Müller or a Lefroy.

In Russia alone railway travelling may be accounted all gain and no loss ; for there is no country in which one travels slower, and in which there would be less to lose by travelling faster. There is, it is true, no line in either hemisphere that comes up to the comforts and luxuries of the Moscow and St. Petersburg line. Roomy and lofty saloon carriages ; a window-seat, a *fauteuil* lit, a hand-luggage net, for every traveller ; a toilet room, a ladies' room at the end of each compartment ; regular halts at convenient intervals ; the finest stations, the best supplied and cheapest refreshment rooms ; the loftiest, widest, cleanest, tight-roofed platforms to circulate and stretch one's legs in ; and everything everywhere contrived to protect the traveller from winter cold or summer heat.

A great improvement, all this, upon the cramped, open sledge of other days, with the thermometer 30 degrees below the freezing point, and the chill creeping in and curdling your blood under your fur coat, cap, and boots, the snow and sleet pelting your face, a pack of wolves howling in the rear, ready to take the hindmost, and the motion of the sledge over snow-drifts and bare hard-frozen ruts causing you to bob up and down like a buoy on the surging waves, with now and then the chances of an upset, and " many passengers troubled

as if with sea-sickness ;" yet even these miseries were preferable to summer travelling in the terrible *tarantass*, as they call a springless post-chaise, with the stifling heat and blinding glare of a 22 hours' day, and the dust both stifling and blinding, and the jolting which broke every bone in your skin.

Of all or some of these delights of Russian travelling in the good old times a stranger may still make ample experience at the present day if he ventures beyond the railway track, or even if he tries any other line than that between the two capitals ; hardly excepting even the international ones coming from Germany or Austria, or those branching from St. Petersburg to the Baltic regions. Everywhere, except on the model line above described, the rate of speed is distressingly slow, the stoppages outrageously frequent and unconscionably long ; the shelter, the cleanliness, the fare at the buffets, the general arrangement at the stations being by no means better than it should be ; indeed, considerably worse than it need be.

Even in some of the least objectionable railways, where the contractors and managers have contrived everything for the passengers' comfort, they seem to have in no way consulted their wishes or their pleasure. The carriages, built on the plan of the American saloon-cars, combine many of the inestimable advantages of safety and convenience ; but they are divided all along

into two compartments ; the sleeping compartment being, for the sake of privacy, closed by an invidious, unsociable wooden wall, forbidding all intercourse, and allowing only a one-sided view of the outer world. Even such a limited look-out must be caught by sitting bolt upright, for the windows are small and pitched very high, grudging both fresh air and light, as if in these climates the objection people have to the one blessing inspired them with an equally unconquerable abhorrence of the other.

Not improbably the railway companies considered that the less a stranger saw of Russia the more favourable would be the impression he would carry away about it. For the towns along the line are almost invariably miles away from the stations, too much out of sight and in too low positions to be even noticed ; and, as a rule, too hopelessly like one another, too destitute of interest, to deserve even the few minutes' visit that the train might allow. And as for the country, the panorama is almost everywhere the same dreary flat from end to end : the earth spreading out like a broad dish all round to the horizon, and the vault of heaven encompassing it like a dish-cover ; the idea of the universe such as man conceived it when he went by the light of his senses, and before Galileo put spectacles on his nose, and made him see " more worlds than one."

A dead flat, hardly broken at distant intervals by a

wave of the ground, by some long low ridge, or small scrubby knoll; interminable, monotonous woodland; not primæval forest, but mere young birch and fir, stunted and ragged, with here and there a bit of rough clearing, a patch of coarse pasture. Anon, great rye-fields, stretching beyond man's ken, checkered here and there by more or less abortive attempts at wheat, barley, or potato crops; the ground, as a rule, without hedge, fence, or wall—nobody's or everybody's ground—open to the inroad of cattle; a sandy, salty, to all appearance irreclaimable, soil; a backward, slovenly cultivation; the cattle neither well-bred nor well-fed; everywhere a sense of loneliness; only at vast distances log-houses and barns, mostly untenanted; horses, cows, sheep, turkeys and geese in flocks, unattended; and farther off, straggling towns and villages, with high-domed churches and tall factory-chimneys; and near the stations great piles of wood, solidly ranged in rows of logs of different size and various colours, as high as houses, and not without some architectural pretensions, and some artistic attempt at quaint, tasteful patterns.

The ground, for large tracts, swampy, cut up by miry ditches, or soaked into shallow morasses, where the water stagnates as if at a loss to make up its mind whether to flow north or south, east or west; and meanwhile spreading out into vast meres or lagoons, in some of which green weedy islets are lazily floating

from shore to shore—islets, which the rustics of the adjoining farms, like those of Holland, endeavour to catch as they drift past, mooring them, and annexing them to their mainland domains.

Such is the view, or series of views, exhibited before the traveller as the train wafts him leisurely, wearily along. A view by no means calculated to give him a correct notion of things ; for the railway in Russia, as in other countries, is too often made to go through the lowest, flattest, dreariest districts ; and even along the line the soil is very far from being as hopelessly barren, or the neighbourhood as utterly desolate, as one might feel tempted to believe.

It will also soon be found, on closer acquaintance, that the “horrors” of Russian travelling, not only by rail, but also by post, sledge, or steamer, have been absurdly exaggerated. In many of the central provinces of the empire, and along the main tracks, it would be idle to talk of “roughing it,” or of taking “a cork bed and bedding, with mattresses, bolsters, and sheets, and towels, English saddles, portable baths, air-cushions, a Rob Roy *cuisine*, tea, brandy, candles, preserved meats,” with all the other encumbrances which guide books describe as “absolutely necessary,” yet which I found it possible to dispense with throughout my wanderings.

The hotels in large cities—the *Europe* and *Angleterre* in St. Petersburg, the *Dresden* and *Slovianski Bazaar* in

Moscow—are simply magnificent ; and in minor towns, at Kasan, Kief, Tiflis, Odessa, etc., not much worse than in Spain or Italy. Most of them have German, French, Swiss, or Italian landlords, and not unfrequently Tartar waiters. Only a few of them are joint-stock speculations. In most you are brought face to face with your host, an inestimable advantage ; and if you know how to make yourself agreeable, you are admitted to take your meals with the family, in the style of the real primitive *table-d'hôte*, also a desirable arrangement, as the domestic fare is good, and there is no other “round table ;” the restaurant being often altogether unconnected with the lodging establishment. At the restaurant one may have what is called a “house dinner,” or ordinary, or choose one’s own fare on the terms set down in the bills.

The tariff of charges for board and lodging is nailed up in several languages in every room, as in German hotels, and the bills are handed over weekly ; there is, consequently, no occasion for “higgling,” as the guide books recommend, on putting up—a useless show of mistrust which can only offend and do mischief ; as the landlords, however keenly alive to their interest, did not seem to me unreasonably extortionate, or dishonest.

Indeed, it is but justice to say, that in my experience I saw nothing of those petty thieving propensities with which the Russians of the lowest ranks are generally

charged ; nothing of that readiness to snatch up travelling-bags, cloaks, wrappers, and other "unconsidered trifles," against which I had been so officiously warned on approaching the frontier.

Even at the poorest villages and solitary post-houses a traveller in Russia is never at a loss for fresh and wholesome brown (rye) bread, eggs in any quantity, and the best amber-coloured tea, in bright Bohemian tumblers, hissing-hot from the *samovar*, or Russian charcoal-heated tea-urn—pure and deliciously-flavoured tea to be had nowhere out of Russia or Eden.

On the steppe, here and there, in Cossack or Tartar districts, the accommodation may be of a more primitive kind. Yet to have to sleep on hard settees or actual bare boards will very seldom happen, and to lie down without dinner or supper of some sort, hardly ever. The real drawbacks are scantiness of water, and absence, even in some of the best hotels, of baths in the bed or dressing-rooms—of baths of any kind ; many of the natives being apparently satisfied if they can barely moisten one eye after another, as if they had sore eyes, and were applying rose-water. A Russian wash-hand-stand not unfrequently consists of a little tin fountain with a spout, laid on, and emptying into, a stand in the shape of a cottage pianoforte, with a pedal ; you press the pedal with your right foot, and out flows about half a pint of water, which you must catch in the hollow of

your hand and use as it passes, and before the scanty supply is exhausted.

But other and far worse inconveniences will be found in parts of the premises which shall be nameless, and for which the habits of the natives in general are more answerable than any shortcomings on the part of the owner or servants of the hotel. Into some of the Russian inns, even of crowded towns, the guide-books tell us with good reason, that "it would be rashness for ladies to set their foot." The fact is, that Russian hotels, at least in the provinces, are only intended for Russian inmates, and no alien should put up at any of them, who is not prepared to "do in Russia as the Russians do." We all know in what a state the so-called "country hotels" were apt to be all over the continent before the golden tide of English tourists had swept and sweetened them.

There are neither books nor newspapers, except Russian ones, in Russian hotels; and what are called "reading rooms" are generally used by billiard-players and smokers. The use of tobacco-smoke is universal in Russia—common to both sexes; no public, and hardly any private, dining or drawing-room is free from it. Ladies of all ranks travel with a cigarette-case in their pocket, and have no scruple about asking for "a light" of the first male stranger they meet.

There is nothing readable at the book-stalls in

Russian railway stations, except what is Russian. Materially, at least, your Russian is now-a-days extremely patriotic and exclusive. It is a mistake to think that even in the best hotels, and along the main streets of the largest cities, French, English, or German, can enable a stranger to make his way in Russia without either the knowledge of the Russian tongue, or the aid of a commissioner and interpreter. The names of the streets, the inscriptions over the shops, the notice-boards on the railway carriages and waiting-rooms, the bills of fare at the restaurants, are usually in Russian, and in Russian characters. There is no longer a journal edited anywhere in Russia in a foreign language, except the official *Journal de St. Petersbourg*, in French, and the *Herold*, and *St. Petersburger Zeitung*, in German, all published in the capital.

In this respect there is what a stranger might feel inclined to call "regress" in Russia. The polyglot talents which distinguish the people of this country seem to be the privilege of those upper classes which can afford foreign tutors, governesses, and nurses, for their rising families. In the middle and lower ranks an Englishman will find here as few persons able or willing to answer his questions in any other language than that of the country as a Russian would in England.

But, however dire a toil and discomfort travelling in Russia may seem to the Russians themselves or to a

stranger visiting Russia on business, it will be found as expensive as if it were a luxury. The price of railway tickets, which was originally moderate, had to be raised to meet the Government's taxes. And with respect to hotel bills, laundresses' bills, hackney-coach hire, fees to porters, waiters, commissionnaires, and the like, a stranger will find many persons ready to make the best of his inexperience or necessity. In such matters *tutto il mondo é paese*, and Russia is your true land of liberty. There is no tariff for the *isvoshtchik*, or droski-driver; none, at least, that he will produce or abide by. You give him what he asks, and he will ask for more; but give him what you like and treat him like a dog, and he will be satisfied and thankful; for the soul of the serf is still in him, and in any one who knows how to bully him he recognizes a master.

All this may explain how it is that so few mere pleasure-tourists ever come to Russia. It is not uncommon to fall in with Anglo-Indian or other Eastern travellers, who on their homeward journey by the overland route, or the Suez Canal, will steam across the Mediterranean and the *Ægean*, from Alexandria to Constantinople and Odessa, and hence take the train direct to Warsaw, Moscow, or St. Petersburg; achieving their journey by rail through Germany, Belgium, and France, or by steamer across the Baltic.

But even these birds of passage only choose this route for convenience, shortness, or cheapness. They seldom stop for a few hours even in the principal cities; and, as to the country, they think they have enough of it, if what they see only enables them to say that "they have seen it."

CHAPTER II.

ST. PETERSBURG.

The Russian Capital—Russia's Growth—Rise of St. Petersburg—Its Site—Its Character—Its Aspect—Foreign Influence—National Aspirations—Russian or Moscovite—St. Petersburg or Moscow.

THE phrase "Divisi toto orbe," by which the old Latin poet designated the primitive inhabitants of Great Britain, might for many centuries have been with greater propriety applied to the ancient population of these Russian regions. The sea or the desert isolated them on all sides.

This segregation from the rest of mankind did not much affect the uncouth races of Scythians and Sarmatians who appear to have first settled in these vast plains. They were simply pastoral, nomadic tribes, whose wealth was their cattle, their mode of trade the caravan, the river boat or raft, and who knew or wished for nothing beyond the ample territory over which they rambled at will, with hardly a chance of over-stepping or even reaching its boundary.

But when Scythia became Russia ; when Ruric and

his Varægs, or Warangians, from Scandinavia settled in the country, as their Norman kinsmen had done in Neustria, in England, and the Two Sicilies, coming as guests and auxiliaries, and remaining as conquerors and rulers, a new life was diffused over the broad land. The new comers brought with them their bold, stirring, marauding spirit of enterprise, which soon urged them southward to the very gates of Constantinople, and enabled them to come back from it with Christianity in their train for the people, with imperial brides for their princes, besides a dim knowledge of civilization, and a vague aspiration to it for all.

Thus for above seven centuries, 862—1598, the Princes of the House of Ruric, settled now at Novgorod the Great, now at Kief, now at Vladimir, and finally at Moscow—first as Princes, then as Grand Princes or Grand Dukes, and at last as Czars (Cæsars) or Tzars—fulfilled their mission, which was to strive for dominion, and to reach the boundaries of the civilized world.

But dissensions among themselves, the overwhelming invasion and crushing yoke of the Mongol Tartars, whose vassals the Russian Princes remained during nearly two and a half centuries, 1220—1462, and finally long wars with Lithuania, with Poland, with Sweden, with Turkey, and other powerful neighbours, stood in the way of the accomplishment of Russia's destinies, till, after the extinction of Ruric's descendants, in the main

line, in 1598, and the accession of the House of Romanoff, at the close of a stormy and disastrous interregnum, in 1614,—the country had been prepared for the coming of the man who understood what had been throughout Russia's instinct, and wrought it into clear, self-conscious, strong will.

Peter the Great, 1689—1725, though a Czar's son, could hardly be said to have been born in the purple, nor yet to have been trained in the wholesome school of adversity. His half-sister, Sophia, endeavoured, not only to supplant, but also to corrupt and unnerve him from earliest age. But the very means used to further her purpose only frustrated it; for out of the fifty youths chosen amongst the worst characters to be his amusers, *i. e.* his companions of dissipation or debauch, there happened to be a few aliens—Lefort, a Genevese; Gordon, a Scotchman; and others—who fired Peter's imagination with glowing pictures of civilized life, as it existed in their native lands, and became instrumental in the young Prince's efforts to redeem himself and his country from barbarism by Europeanising both.

Peter the Great exhibited in every respect the traits of a primitive Russian type. He had all the perceptive and retentive faculties peculiar to the Slavic intellect; its aptness for imitation, and its almost total absence of creative genius. He had indomitable earnest will, unwearied patience and perseverance, heroic self-denial,

and a correct estimate of what was in him, of what he could do or should leave undone.

Peter felt stifled within the boundaries of his own state. Russia was to him like a house without doors or windows ; like Dr. Howe's Laura Bridgeman, a human body born blind, deaf and dumb, utterly cut off from all communication with the outer world.

The Great Czar panted for air ; and he was aware that to have it he must fight for it. He needed an army and a navy, and he well knew that he might as well hope to evolve a land and sea force from his imagination as to recruit it among his more than half-brutified people. He took foreign mercenaries, men and officers, into his pay, looked for models for his ships in Holland and England, and was soon in a position to appear in the field.

He fought the Swedes and the Poles for an outlet into the Baltic. He was beaten ; but he learnt from the battles he lost how battles should be won, and ended by defeating his enemies on the very fields on which he had been defeated. From those enemies he took Esthonia, Livonia, with part of Finland ; and, what he valued above all things, the districts of Ingria and Carelia, the ground destined, in 1703, to become the foundation of the city which was to bear his name—Peter's burg—improperly called by us St. Petersburg.

The choice of the site was not made at random ; for

the city was laid at the mouth of the Neva, near the spot where that river, or emissary, issues from the great Lake of Ladoga ; a spot which had already been the natural port of Russia, when the flat boats of the old free city of Novgorod the Great, a kind of Russian Venice, coming down from the Lake of Ilmen and along the river Volkhof, and crossing Lake Ladoga, found their way into the sea by the Neva, and by this channel carried on the monopoly of Russian trade in connection with the Hanseatic cities.

Peter made equally strenuous attempts to open his way to the South, but was less successful in that quarter. In Turkey, as well as in Poland, he left his programme to be carried out by Catherine II., called "the Great," and her successors ; and he died leaving behind him that "testament," not written in words, as was supposed, but graven in every act of his life and reign—by which his descendants were bidden to allow themselves no rest till they had made their way to all parts of the world, reaching their natural boundaries on the shores of the Mediterranean, the Caspian, and the Persian seas.

In the furtherance of Peter's magnificent scheme it is evident that his descendants, if they had well interpreted the Great Man's mind, should have been looking for and coveting, not territories, but simply outlets ; not new mansions but merely doors and windows to the house bequeathed to them. For vastness was already for

Russia mere encumbrance, and the soil of Russia is still so far out of proportion with the human beings who ought to utilize it, that, while the area of the Empire is said to cover one-sixth of the habitable globe, its population does not greatly exceed that of the two adjoining states—Austria and Germany—put together; and its rate of increase falls very far short of that of the most stirring and thriving European or American communities.*

To check the growth of the population, and to prevent its material and moral development, the nature of the Russian climate and soil, no doubt, must powerfully contribute.

This is a country over a large part of which the extremes of heat and cold share the year between them, dooming man to unwholesome seclusion for the winter months, and only allowing him to breathe free air in the summer season, when the sultriness of the weather utterly unnerves and prostrates him. Between the intense cold that stiffens the limbs and numbs the faculties, and the glowing heat that takes away breath,

* The population of the Russian Empire was, in round numbers, 81,000,000, in 1872; it had risen to about 87,000,000 ten years later, and it may have reached 90,000,000 at the present day. In European Russia the average in the most crowded provinces, as in Poland and the Black Earth districts, is above fifty per square verst; in the northern provinces, as in Archangel, Olonetz, Vologda, etc., it is barely from twenty to ten per square verst.

and induces torpor and listlessness, there is in these latitudes no transition or preparation; and the human frame, not led by degrees, and not inured day by day to either extreme, equally suffers from exposure to both. In his hermetically sealed apartments, with double windows, and hot stoves within doors, and his panoply of furs swathing him up to his very eyes out of doors, the Russian in winter is perpetually consuming his own breath; and when at last he breaks out from long hibernation, from that endless night when no man can work, he finds himself hardly fit for the exertions demanded by that interminable day which allows man no rest.

What I here say applies to city life, and especially to the habits of the capital, with which I have already become tolerably well acquainted. I am not questioning the native vigour or hardihood of the Slavic race, or doubting that either dire necessity or stern discipline can enable a valiant nation to get the better of atmospheric influences, and by dint of energy and constant exercise to derive strength from those very inclemencies that tend to weaken it. I am aware that this is the spot where the officers of the Guards of the Emperor Nicholas used to go about in their glittering uniforms, "while the frost was hard enough to cripple a stag," with never a rag of a cloak to be seen about them; for the Czar himself, in emulation

of his mad father, the Emperor Paul, exposed himself to wind, snow, hail, and storm, and expected from his officers the same disregard of the severity of a Polar winter. And I am aware that the Russian soldiers, chiefly levied among the northern peasantry, can be made to endure the greatest hardships both on the march and at the bivouac, being in that respect more than a match for their most stubborn Ottoman opponents.

Still what I see here day by day satisfies me that these Russians, in the towns, and as a people, are more susceptible, more afraid of heat and cold, more self-indulgent than any other set of men in the world.

A stranger from other countries can hardly travel in Russia anywhere by train even in June or July without being nearly asphyxiated by his fellow-passengers, who insist on putting up all the glasses of the double windows during the night; and who, when the sun is high at noon, lie lolling in their seats with outstretched arms and legs, like stranded porpoises, unable to move or talk, or probably, if they tried ever so hard, even to think. And the same collapse of all human strength is equally observable here in St. Petersburg, a Sybaritic city, where every man, woman, or dog, every butcher and basket, every laundress and bundle, seems rich enough to afford the luxury of a droski; and where the *rari nantes* on the side-walks crawl and shamble on legs of which the owners seem

to have lost, or never to have acquired, the proper use.

But, after all, a traveller should always make it a point, when he finds it possible, to visit a country when it is in what is called its own element. Russia is the land of snow and ice, and may possibly be seen to advantage in skating and sledge-driving weather. All provisions here are made against the discomforts of a hard winter. But against the scourge of a summer dust, which sweeps day and night over Peter's city, all the pumps drawing water from the four branches of the Neva are inefficient. There is nothing for it but to turn one's back upon it, and that is what everybody does who can manage it. The Court is at Gatchina, Petrofski, Pavlovo, or anywhere except where the official papers say it is; the garrison is all camping out and fighting mock battles; and even the ministerial offices are deserted, their Excellencies seeking a respite from petitioners in some of the islands in the neighbourhood, where their amphibious villas are just above the water-edge. The city is left to a few priests, the police, the beggars, the officers of Her Britannic Majesty's squadron now here on a week's holiday, and to me. The *Hôtel d'Europe*, where I am staying, the best in the town, and, I am told, a paragon of tidiness for eleven months in the year, is now a heap of dust and rubbish, with masons' scaffolds and white-washers' pails,

being swept, scraped, and painted like a London club-house in mid-September. For this is the dead season in St. Petersburg, and the place is altogether too big for a man to have it all to himself.

What a town it is! How large; how dismally empty! How it squats like an immense alligator half in and half out of a swamp, modelled on Amsterdam, and reminding one of Venice! What glorious panorama it presents if you look down upon it from the top of the Alexander Column, or the gallery round the dome of Isaac's Church! What miles and miles of "Prospects," or, as the French would say, "Boulevards"; what endless succession of wide-open spaces and magnificent distances, of long straight lines of walls and rows of trees, and interminable avenues, contrived, as it were, to allow the town to run out of town!

A city of churches, convents, and palaces; of cupolas, steeples, crosses, and monuments; of buildings in all styles, European or Asiatic; quaint originals or indifferent copies, many of them grand and massive, yet strewn over space, at hap-hazard, on a perfectly flat surface, grouping nowhere; nowhere laid out with good effect or with an eye to the picturesque. A town of princes, to all appearance, or of wealthy bankers or traders, with nothing mean, no back slums, no rag-fair; no paupers except in the hospitals, no beggars save at the church-doors; whatever might seem unbecoming

carefully hidden out of sight: the whole covering scores of miles of ground, a maze of isles and islets, of bridges and embankments, of river and branches of river, and canals.

It is a town made by one man, made on a plan and with a purpose; and when that is said all is said. It was not one of the cities of Nature's own building; consequently, it may be feared, not one of those that abide. Its foundation was suggested by a great thought, and it turns out to be a great mistake.

It is questionable indeed whether Peter the Great ever meant St. Petersburg for a permanent Court residence or capital. As late as 1724, seven months before his death, it was not here but at Moscow that he celebrated the coronation of his wife Catherine, and Moscow has continued to this day to be the crowning place of all his successors. If Peter spent much of his time on this spot, it was chiefly because a work of such magnitude as he had undertaken required the Master's incessant presence, and his constant intercourse with the foreign countries which supplied him with materials, models, and skilled workmen. For the rest, all that Peter wanted here was a port, and he could, under all circumstances, have found no better. He built it on conquered ground, beyond the boundaries of all Russia, amid a Finnish population, the former subjects of Sweden. He draughted the workmen

among the State serfs in all his provinces, and wasted 100,000 human lives in the achievement; labour being as cheap for him as it was for the kingly builders of the Egyptian pyramids.

The site was a swamp, an unsafe, unhealthy swamp—so unsafe that some of its finest monuments—the monolith column of Alexander I. and the Isaac Church—show in their deep crevices the signs of the rapid decay to which the treacherous ground underneath dooms them. The ground is so unsafe as to be subject to periodical inundations like that of Rome; the city has already been destructively flooded eight times since its foundation, and even last year, 1880, the waters rose more than ten feet above the ordinary level, driving the people from their cellars and basement floors, as well as from the villas and gardens of the lower islands.

There were even for many years ominous speculations as to the possibility of the whole town being submerged. "The Gulf of Finland," people reasoned, "runs westward from St. Petersburg in the direction whence the heaviest storms ever blow. Imagine a storm to set in from the west, in April or May, when the ice is breaking up; and suppose that this should happen just when the water in the river is at the highest. The masses of ice blown in from the sea would meet those that float down from the land-side;

and the collision between the two opposite masses could not fail to overwhelm the whole city; when its proud palaces would vanish like the fabric of a dream, and its princes and beggars would sink into the same watery grave like Pharaoh and his host in the Red Sea."

The town, however, has already stood 178 years, and the catastrophe seems indefinitely adjourned. As no such combination of storm, high water, and great thaw as croakers conjured up has yet occurred, sanguine people have become, if not sceptical, at least perfectly indifferent as to the possibility of the dreaded occurrence.

Far different, but perhaps more serious, is another danger that threatens St. Petersburg.

The object of Peter the Great in planning his city was, as I said, to bring Russian barbarism into contact with European refinement. He created here a mongrel community, in which the European element vastly predominated. He placed aliens at the head of his battalions, manned his ships with them, planned his buildings after their designs, lavished on them Court dignities and Government offices, and allowed them the monopoly of trade and industry. St. Petersburg was an extra-territorial capital, as it were; cosmopolitan; anything but Russian; and any civilization that could flow from it to the provinces was barely skin deep. The favour that strangers, and especially Germans, enjoyed

at Court was so obvious, that even as late as the reign of Alexander I., when that Emperor wished to requite the services of a deserving veteran, General Yarmoloff, and encouraged him to name his own reward, the blunt old soldier merely answered, "Sire, make me a German"—just as a faithful but jealous mastiff would, if he could, say to a master partial to an Italian greyhound or French poodle, "Make me a lap-dog."

Russian barbarism, however, was only "scotched, not killed," even by the transcendent genius and resolute temper of the great Peter.

The old Boyards, whose privileges had been much curtailed by his predecessors, and whom he shocked by his democratic maxim, "*La carrière ouverte aux talents*," and by his elevation to the highest rank of such favourites as Prince Menchikoff, originally a pastry-cook's errand-boy, were arrayed against him almost to a man. Equally ill-disposed towards him were the clergy, whose lands and serfs he confiscated, whose bells he melted into cannon, and at whose head he placed himself, proclaiming himself Patriarch and assuming Pontifical as well as Imperial, unlimited authority.

The priests called Peter "Antichrist," and roused against him their own flock, while equal enmity was felt against him by the swarms of dissenters; indeed by the whole people, whom the Czar stripped by main

force of their flowing Asiatic garments, and whose long beards he shaved—those holy beards which the orthodox cultivated as a symbol of their faith, and without which they dared not show themselves at St. Peter's gate, suing for admission among the elect—those precious beards which, even when desecrated by the Emperor's scissiors, many treasured up with reverence, and had buried with them in their coffins, to have them at hand to stick on *postiche* when the angel's trump should sound and call the faithful to muster.

This underhand war of darkness against light, of custom against reform, was carried on against Peter with such success as to win over his son Alexis, of whom his father used to say, as Louis XI. of France said of his son and successor, Charles VIII., "*Cet enfant gâtera tout.*" The opposition and misconduct of this fractious prince so angered the Czar that he had him tried and sentenced to death by his council and synod, and, it is believed, executed him with his own hand.

But the animosity of the Conservative, or old Moscovite, party was not quelled by that brutal act, and it gained such strength, that after Peter's death, and that of his wife the Empress Catherine I., Peter II., the son of the murdered Alexis, giving in to its suggestions, re-established the Imperial residence and the seat of government at Moscow; and had his life been

prolonged, he would in all probability have effaced every trace of his grandfather's work.

But at the close of his short reign (1727—1730), the sceptre of all the Russias *tomba en quénouille*. For full 66 years, to the death of Catherine II., called the Great, in 1795, the empire was under petticoat government. The females who followed upon one another with but short intervals, either as regents or reigning empresses, themselves, in most instances, born or brought up abroad, or under the influence of advisers, favourites, or paramours, chiefly foreign, utterly estranged themselves from the country submitted to their sway ; and so far Europeanized or Frenchified the capital as to give it a flash splendour and superficial polish which deceived the eye, and was accepted by the world at large as of good alloy.

There was nothing Russian, however, nothing of what is good or valuable in the Russian nature, to be found in St. Petersburg ; and the national character never had a chance of showing itself in the mongrel place. Russia was never at home in that mere beaver's city.

It was only after the French invasion and the conflagration of Moscow, in 1812, that it became manifest that Russianism, after all, was not altogether barbarism ; that behind that mere conservatism there were noble instincts of patriotism and independence, and

an aspiration to improvement and refinement which should not be borrowed from French millinery or democracy, but should spring from home traditions, and should be based upon domestic customs and institutions.

Russia received her baptism of blood and fire at Moscow. A new life began for her. The nation had fought and suffered for independence, and won her titles to freedom.

For despotism, after all, was a plant of recent growth, and an exotic in Russia; and the liberties of the subjects, which had certain guarantees before the Czar Peter the Great proclaimed himself "Emperor and Autocrat," and some of which himself respected and maintained, were not utterly trodden down till the formula, *L'Etat c'est moi*, was imported, together with the fashions of big-wigs and high-heels, from the court of the Grand Monarque; and it was only stereotyped here from a natural horror of French revolutionary Jacobinism.

For Catherine of Russia, like Paul, her successor, and like Joseph II. of Austria, her contemporary, loudly as they applauded the promulgation of *Les droits de l'homme* in Paris, always in their own states fell back upon the maxim, "*Mon métier à moi, c'est d'être Royaliste.*"

The sovereigns who ascended the throne after those

troubled times, the sons of Paul, Alexander I. (1802—1825) and Nicholas I. (1825—1856), though different in temper and disposition, were both well-meaning and patriotic rulers; but they only saw St. Petersburg, and ignored the rest of the empire. Even if they travelled through the provinces, their journeys were as rapid as post-horses, and more lately, steam, could make them. Their business was limited to grand reviews of the regiments quartered in the cities, and to *levées* for the entertainment of the upper, *i.e.* official, classes.

What they were allowed to see was no more real Russia than the caravan show which Potemkin carried about with him all along his mistress's, the Empress Catherine's, progress through the newly-conquered southern steppe, and which he laid out at every stage as a charming *mise en scène* of happy model villages and Arcadian rural districts, to impress his sovereign with the wealth of her new territories and the happiness of her new subjects, and thus to console her for the blood and gold their annexation had cost her.

Those emperors gave themselves little time or trouble to acquaint themselves with the wants of their subjects, or to guess their aspirations; and they came back to their city on the Neva, where a fool's paradise was always ready for their reception. But recent events have come rather suddenly to awaken the rulers of Russia from their pleasant slumbers.

A benevolent and by no means unpopular, though weak and inconsistent, ruler, Alexander II., after repeated, almost miraculous escapes, has fallen by the hands of a knot of assassins. His son, the present emperor, Alexander III., dooms himself to seclusion, and is seen out of doors by no man. In this city of Peter, where the life of an emperor, however cheap in the estimation of his kinsmen or courtiers, was the most sacred thing under heaven in the eyes of his subjects—such a life—without infinite, undignified precautions, no longer seems worth a day's purchase!

Has it come to that? This is then no longer the city where Peter's successors were to be met with, on foot, in the saddle, or in a small plain droski, at any hour of the day, in any quarter of the town. This is no longer the population among whom, in the great cholera riots of 1832, when the mob were storming the hospitals, and murdering the doctors, suspected of spreading the infection by poison, the emperor Nicholas ventured out unarmed, unattended; entered the church of the Haymarket, where the rioters had their headquarters, and bade the men kneel down and cross themselves, as he did, and join him in prayers to the Almighty that "He might grant them forgiveness and deliverance." And the rioters fell on their knees around him abashed, repentant, submissive, "allowing the police to make its way into their ranks, and

quietly take away the ringleaders from the midst of them."

It seems hardly likely that the Nihilists, to whom the murder of the late emperor is imputed, reckless and desperate as they might be, would have resorted to regicide, that last argument of hopeless revolutionists, had they not imagined that a revolution in this country, whatever may be its character, had become inevitable.

The material progress of Russia since her victories of 1812 has been uninterrupted; and, with it, the influence of public opinion, and the impulse of national feeling, have been slowly but unremittingly at work. Every one says that we are here in the midst of a crisis; and that, whatever phases it may have to go through, the ultimate result must be a new order of things, the turning of a new leaf in the book of Russian history.

Russia, I hear it repeated, will have to be re-Russianized; and such a process cannot be easily applied to this upstart and mongrel capital. St. Petersburg, as men now have found out, was a mistake. Not a mistake in its founder's days, as I have said, or as it was by him intended to be; for Peter meant it, not for an idle metropolis, but for a trading-place, at a time when Russian commerce was in its infancy, and could have no other channel.

But trade in our days has found new inlets and outlets; railways have opened and are opening new ways of communication, all of them tending to the centre of Russian life and activity, of real wealth and productiveness; and such a centre is no longer, if it ever was, St. Petersburg, but Moscow.

The cry, "Back to Moscow!" which was raised again and again for years after this "Rome Tartare," as Madame de Stael called St. Petersburg, rose from the waters—resounds now in not loud but deep notes wherever I go.

Abandoned to her natural resources, this city of Peter would have little *raison d'être*.

Take away the Court, and the 60,000 men of the garrison, and the whole host of the official world, and the town would soon be a desert, as it now, in this dead season, does look. Of the various industries which the capital and the environs boast, the most flourishing, such as the glass, porcelain, bronze, mosaic, tapestry, and other manufactories of nick-nacks and luxuries, would vanish with the imperial patronage which called them into being. And the port, which is not at St. Petersburg, but at Cronstadt,—in an island one hour and a half off by steam, and whence goods have to be trans-shipped and carried by lighters to the city wharves,—never was a convenient one at the best of times, and would soon become impracticable hereafter; for it would lead to a

mart with nothing but an unproductive desert or an exhausted forest at the back of it.

So portentous an achievement as a new shifting of the Russian capital would involve the incalculable loss of the treasures which have been lavished with such mad extravagance, and with so little taste or sense, on its colossal edifices, no doubt. And this consideration may indefinitely delay, or even absolutely prevent, the removal. But what would be loss to St. Petersburg might turn out gain for the whole nation, and no one can calculate the results of the irresistible logic of events.

For there are other and stronger motives than mere material interests to recommend the removal.

Russia has had enough of foreign civilization ; she has become intensely national ; and if she did not much like foreigners when she was made to feel that she had need of them, she is not likely to harbour more respect for, or love of, them now when she is conscious of her power to dispense with them and *far da sè*.

There was a time—by no means remote—when the Germans were at home here in Russia, as in Denmark, and all over the North ; but a strong re-action set in against them during the late reign ; and it is no recommendation to St. Petersburg to have it said that there are still some 50,000 of these obnoxious aliens within its walls.

“Holy Russia” is yearning after its “Holy City”—the city which has been its head and heart for five and a half centuries; and where, whatever may be the affluence of foreigners, the race of genuine, unsophisticated Moscovites will always constitute a strong and sound majority.

The time was when at the Court, and in the higher circles of St. Petersburg, the word “Moscovite” was used as a term of reproach, to designate all that was uncouth and half-savage. But now I have heard, no later than the other day, a lady, sprung from one of the proudest historic Russian families, and through her husband closely connected with the Imperial Government, exclaim with genuine warmth and emphasis, “*Je suis Moscovite! Bien Moscovite!*”

That cry tells a whole history; for the word Moscovite was meant by aliens, by a bastard Court, and by the “golden youth” who imported foreign notions, and affected outlandish manners, to brand with barbarism the kernel of the nation from which they estranged themselves, and with which they would fain have disclaimed all connection. But now that Moscovy—that original Grand-Duchy round which the empire has grown, that strong, indigenous race which absorbed extraneous elements, and round which the homogeneous, dominant race clustered—has shaken off, or aspires to shake off, barbarism, it is struggling for a life of its

own, and has ceased to be afraid or ashamed to assert itself.

“ Yes ! we are Moscovites ! ”

“ We are the people who were ripening into some social organization of our own before Peter the Great undertook to force us into a refinement in which we were *pourris avant d'être mûrs*; before Ivan III., the crafty, and Ivan IV., the terrible, put an end to Novgorod the Great, to its trade and freedom ; nay, even before Ruric and his Warangians brought among us that feudal system which sowed dissension and planted tyranny in our land. In all our steps towards social progress we were misled by our rulers. It is full time that we should ourselves take the lead, even if it were necessary to retrace our steps, and to remove every obstacle which might prevent our taking a fresh start.”

Such would be the meaning of a re-transfer of the Russian Court and Government from St. Petersburg to Moscow.

CHAPTER III.

MOSCOW; THE STONES.

The Moscovite Capital—The Road to Moscow—Its Historical Reminiscences—Its Site—The Kremlin—Its Look-out—Its Buildings—Churches and Palaces—Russian Architecture—Russian Pavements—The Droskies—General Aspect of Moscow—Its Suburbs and Environs.

WE came from St. Petersburg to Moscow in the night, for all available trains in Russia travel in the dark, and start or arrive at uncomfortably late or unconscionably early hours; so that we saw nothing of Volkhova, Twer, Klin, and other important localities the train stopped at on our route.

We passed the Valdai Mountains, the backbone of Russia in these parts, from which flow the waters of the Volkhof, the Dūna, and the Volga, a table-land with an undulating surface, and eminences—the mountains—rising 100 to 200 feet above the general level; “formerly,” as the Gazetteer tells us, “mantled with forests of elm, beech, and poplar, the greatest part of which has been cleared.” We crossed them in darkness, barely able to perceive how the destruction had gone on all along the line.

To the north of St. Petersburg, and up to the White Sea at Archangel, stretches the Russian "Forest region;" on our south-eastern progress we were now crossing what is called the "Northern Agricultural Zone;" but though it was by this time full day-light, we saw little evidence either of productive soil or tidy cultivation in the newly-mown hay, or the still green rye and barley crops on the wayside, till we reached the kitchen-gardens and scrubby lawns of Imperial Moscow.

By the time we descried the first spires and domes of the city, there was a truce to the economical and financial discussions with which we had whiled away the dull hours of the sleepless night; and we all strained our eyes upon the distant view of the place with an interest which St. Petersburg had failed to awaken. When the train at last reached the heights called the "Sparrow Hills," the spot where Napoleon reined in his steed as he came in sight, in 1812, the youngsters we had in our carriage cried out "Moscow! Moscow!" with as eager a voice as one may imagine that of the great Corsican's soldiers, when they pointed out and hailed the sacred spot which, as they flattered themselves, was to be the goal and the reward of their toil.

It was as much as I could do to refrain from joining the chorus of those juvenile enthusiasts.

For Moscow is one of the few spots on earth where it has always appeared to me impossible for the most

extravagant expectation to meet with disappointment. It seems that no amount of verbiage that may have been written on it can vulgarize or hackney that page of history which records the exodus of the 300,000 souls of the population of this city, determined to starve out the enemy that could no longer be fought out, no matter what extremities of misery and hunger their resolution might entail upon themselves. And it little matters whether the sacrifice sprang from noble, patriotic instinct, or was imposed on the passive, and, if you will, slavish submissiveness of these Moscovites. The evacuation and burning of Moscow of 1812 stands alone in the annals of mankind as an instance of a nation's self-denial and loyalty, and it hardly seems natural to travel for the first time to this city without having one's soul full of the heroic remembrance to the exclusion of any other thought.

We had a knot of young men in our saloon carriage consisting of well-to-do citizens, partly from the present, partly from the former Russian capital, and these fell to speculating upon a point which has, I believe, hardly ever been mooted in history: viz. what reasons could have induced Napoleon, after crossing the Niemen, to take the route of Moscow instead of marching at once and straight to St. Petersburg; what reasons could have prompted him to depart from his own strategic maxim, that "a campaign should best begin and end by

striking a decisive blow at the enemy's seat of government."

And the question then arose, whether either the Emperor Alexander I., or any Count Rotopchin acting under his orders, would have found among the Frenchified courtiers and Germanized merchants of the city of the Neva the same unhesitating obedience, the same all-enduring devotion, which so promptly responded to their call in the city of the Moskva.

The engine gave a loud shriek, and the station was reached while these topics were being discussed, as well may be imagined, with little hope of bringing them to a conclusion.

But it was not merely at the great emergency of 1812, and by the severe test to which she was then put, that the Moscovite capital emphatically asserted her otherwise indisputable claim to be the heart and soul of the Russian world.

From the time that Russian history emerged out of the chaos of mythical traditions, and down to the accession of Peter the Great, there is hardly an episode in its pages with which some of the monuments, of the edifices, or of the localities of this city are not intimately associated.

On the very day of my arrival, I stood with some of those same young fellow-travellers, with whom I had parted at the station, in the Grand Bazaar Place facing

the Kremlin. In the centre of that vast area they pointed with pride to a bronze group commemorative of an event anterior by two centuries to the catastrophe of Napoleon's invasion and retreat—1611—an event marking a turning-point in Russia's destinies, yet about which I never had heard a word, at least never a word that I had not completely forgotten.

I learnt now that I stood before the monument raised in honour of Minin and Pojarski; that the first was a peasant, the last a boyard; and that these two alone did not despair of the country, when a long interregnum had plunged it into the worst excesses of discord and anarchy; when the Poles had overrun the whole land, occupied and half destroyed the city by fire; and the Polish king, Sigismund III., had resolved to place the crown of Muscovy on the head of his son, Vladislas.

It was then, when all seemed lost, that those two appeared on the scene, like the Godly Twins in ancient Rome, appealed to the people's patriotism, improvised an army, and drove the invader from their boundaries, thus preparing the way for the promotion of the Romanoff Dynasty.

To reward my young friends for their information, and to cap their story, I told them that only on the previous year I had seen, at Madrid, on a central spot in the Prado, another monument, of two other heroes, of whom their brave Moscovites might be said to have

been the precursors—the two Spanish officers, Daoiz and Velarde, the leaders of the movement of the “*Dos de Mayo*” (May 2nd, 1808), to whose memory Madrid and all Spain pay yearly worship.

For the two Spaniards, like the two Russians, stood up alone, amid the general defection or discouragement, against the French of Murat and Joseph Bonaparte; the only difference being, that the Russians conquered and the Spaniards succumbed; yet the deliverance of a nation was ultimately equally the result of the victory of the former and of the martyrdom of the latter.

A clear case of history repeating itself.

On the other hand, Moscow bears the traces of all national calamities: of Tartar inroads and Polish occupation, of plagues, famines, and conflagrations, of scourges which in repeated instances swept away hundreds of thousands of its citizens, and won it the appellation of “The Niobe of Earth’s cities.”

But, independently of all such glorious or dolorous reminiscences, and if nothing else could be said of Moscow, the mere fact that it is a city unlike any other city would be sufficient to awaken the interest of its foreign visitors.

It boasts a magnificent situation, a thoroughly Russian character, and as much picturesque beauty as may arise from endless variety, from a quaint and grotesque originality, from a profusion of gold and

jewellery, and every kind of costly, barbaric ornament, and from a blending of all hues and shades, of all subdued and salient, vivid or pale, chaste or glaring colours on a mad painter's palette.

From the Kremlin to the Chinese city, where nothing Chinese meets the eye, from the Chinese to the White City, and from this again to the suburbs spreading over a circumference of 25 miles, Moscow offers in every respect the most perfect contrast to St. Petersburg. It has not one straight street, not one square inch of level ground; nothing like a plan, no clue for a stranger to make his way through the labyrinth of its crooked thoroughfares. It rose from its ruins after the conflagration of 1812, which had more than half destroyed it, and effaced the main lines of communication originally laid out in concentric circles, as well as the range of walls, moats, and bastions which had encompassed its several wards and divisions, the citizens hastening to rebuild each his own house as he could and where he could, regardless of his neighbours' convenience. The consequence is, that all buildings, large or small, public or private, are huddled together higgledy-piggledy—a stately palace cheek-by-jowl with a paltry hovel; a sumptuous church back to back with a row of dingy shops; houses, palaces, churches, bakeries, and butcheries in wondrous confusion, here pressed together, there standing wide apart with intervening

yards and gardens ; the streets winding around them, here broad, there narrow, but always tortuous or angular ; a marvellous mass of irregularities, charming the eye by the strange variety of size, style, and colour, and all enhanced by the undulating nature of the ground, which breaks up the mass in large groups, and opens broad views at every culminating point and at every street turning.

Moscow will appear a *unique* city to a stranger from any part of Western Europe. But it is only a Russian city to a Russian ; an old Russian city, and prototype of all old Russian cities ; for many of them have their Kremlin, their Chinese and White Cities, the golden domes, the big bells, and all that constitute Moscow's main boast.

And as Moscow may be said to epitomize all that is Russian, so does the Kremlin sum up all that is best worth seeing in Moscow.

The Kremlin, a citadel, a sanctuary, a stronghold intended for a last defence of whatever the town or country held most precious and sacred, is in no respect like the Athenian acropolis or the Roman Capitol, to which some travellers have been pleased to compare it. It has not the commanding position of Bergamo or Biella, Perugia or Orvieto, Spoleto or Narni, or of many other hill-towns of old Italy. It does not even stand so loftily as the *Dom* of Revel, the Kremlin of Nijni

Novgorod, or any of the heights on which Kief is built. In fact, the Moscow Kremlin is not much of a hill; for on one side you may walk into it from your hotel in the Nicholaia Street and other long thoroughfares of the city with hardly any perceptible ascent; and on the other, you stand on a platform sloping with gardens towards the river, and barely a hundred feet above its bed.

On this latter side, however, all the charm of the site at once breaks upon the beholder, whether he looks round on the strange buildings with which the open parade ground of the ancient citadel is crowned, or whether his eye scans the vast panorama of the Valley of the Moskva, the humble stream from which the city takes its name, and which winds round and again round the spot as if wooing it, and loth to quit it.

Beyond the river and the valley rises, far off, the range of the Sparrow Hills, with other gently-swelling grounds, enclosing a wide expanse of town and country, of land and water, of multitudinous objects; a chaos in which a bewildered stranger is for a few minutes at a loss to single out anything.

“Can you imagine what this city would be, if all the millions of money that have for these last 170 years been squandered in St. Petersburg had been used for the aggrandizement and embellishment of this old and natural Queen and Empress of our great country?”

Such was the question put to me by one of my late travelling companions, a young Moscovite patriot, though by birth an English subject, as we stood side by side on the height of the Ivan Tower, in the centre of the Kremlin, and I gazed with amazement on the myriads of motley and *baroque*, yet wonderful and magnificent architectural achievements that clustered on all sides around and beneath us. And, truly, wherever may be the seat of government, it is here that Russian genius has outdone itself. Not a little of the architecture of the Kremlin is old, and some of it may be considered respectable ; for several of the men who were first at work here came from the southern side of the Alps, and belonged to what is called the Golden Age of Italian Art—men who were indifferent whether they were in the pay of Czar or Sultan, and who, in the service of the latter, improved upon the model of St. Sophia of Constantinople, and reared up that masterpiece of Moslem temples, the Mosque of Solyman the Magnificent, which proves that even a Turk may have eyes and understanding.

It is to builders of this description that the Kremlin is indebted for its line of battlemented walls, and for the square towers of the five massive gates, which give it the character of a mediæval fortalice. And it is to them, or to builders still earlier, that we owe our thanks for the simple old Byzantine, semi-Gothic style of the

interior of the Cathedral of the Assumption—the church which has witnessed the coronation of many generations of Russian sovereigns, and which is getting ready for that of the present emperor, should the shells of the treacherous Nihilists spare him till some time next May.

But the achievements of these primitive master-masons exhibit only here and there the vestiges of their original designs. They had to withstand the outrages of war and siege, of wind and storm, of flood and fire, of all the disastrous vicissitudes Moscow had to go through for several centuries; and much of what escaped the ravages of time and man, was in after ages disfigured by the superstructures with which the rude genius or crazy taste of indigenious artists under priestly influence loaded and almost smothered it.

Add to this, that even the first men who raised those edifices from their foundations were aware of the peculiar instincts of their princely patrons, and had to task their inventive powers to the utmost to hit the fancy of the sovereign himself or of his subjects; just as Manchester calico-printers choose the gaudiest colours and the broadest patterns to suit the distant marts of the Levant, or of the negroes of the West Indies. For some of those Moscovite Augustuses were ugly customers to deal with; and one can scarcely imagine what might have been the fate of any one who had attempted

to thwart or trifle with them, or failed in his task to please them—seeing that even pleasing them was not always safe.

For the mightiest of those princes, the Czar Ivan the Terrible (if the tale be true, for it has been told of other princes), did not spare even the poor wight whose success had exceeded his employer's loftiest expectations, and whose wonder of wonders, the church of St. Basil the Blessed, or the Blessing, was the grim Prince's delight to his dying day ; yet whose poor eyes the Czar himself put out, to deprive him of the power of building a duplicate of that church in the service of some rival potentate.

It is possible, also, that even Western builders caught the infection of this vitiated Eastern atmosphere, and indulged in oddities and extravagances which their sober and correct judgment would have condemned, and by which they transcended even the barbarism of the people they were bent upon humouring.

The result is, that German critics, putting together Russian artists, ancient or modern, domestic or foreign, dismiss them unceremoniously and in a few sweeping words, characterizing Russian architecture as "*Byzantinische Pomp mit Asiatischer Verwilderung ;*" or, as we might say, Byzantinism run mad.

There are, the guide-books say, between 300 and 400 churches in Moscow, and I believe more than a

score between churches and convent chapels within the precincts of the Kremlin alone.

Five of these latter cluster together round the lofty tower of Ivan the Great, and close to the large imperial palace built by the Emperor Nicholas, and bearing his name. The churches are not grouped together on any intelligible design. They were reared at various periods and at haphazard, in a small, crowded space ; most of them old ; three of them—the Assumption—the Archangel Michael's, and the Annunciation, the crowning church, the burial church, and the wedding and christening church of the old Czars—distinguished as cathedrals and richly endowed ; yet none of them can be said to have any great pretension to architectural beauty. They are stately, but not large edifices, plainly white-washed on the outside, though some of them with frescoes of the Virgin and Saints under the cornices and on the lintels of the doors and windows, but all surmounted by gilt or silvered balloon-like domes ; the domes usually five to each church, a big central one, with four minor ones at the corners ; but in some instances, as many as nine, eleven, and sixteen domes, and on each a cross, all gilt, the roof itself all gilt. The roof alone seems to have exhausted the builder's ingenuity and his patron's wealth.

The five churches I have named are conspicuous everywhere, and their gorgeous domes form groups with

other cupolas, towers, and spires of the buildings inside and out of the Kremlin ; the effect growing upon the beholder at every step ; the picture changing as he walks round the edge of the platform ; better still if he goes over the bridges and gazes at the prospect from the various points of the lower grounds on the other side of the river, whence the platform itself, with its crown of golden buildings, rises above the green of the gardens, a crown of golden roofs all glancing in the sun.

The Nicholas palace, the minor Imperial palace, the arsenal, the treasury, and other plain, some barrack-like, modern buildings are out of character with the sacred edifices and with the mediæval walls and towers that encompass the Holy Hill, and mar the effect of what, even if not beautiful, must be allowed to be extremely picturesque, and sure to dazzle where it fails to please.

The roots of all those ecclesiastical or imperial edifices, with their glittering crosses or their huge, black spread-eagles, rising at every angle, on every pinnacle, looks so incongruous, so bizarre and irrational, as to suggest the thought that what one is looking at is not the sober work of men, but merely the toy of overgrown children.

And the cracked "King of Bells" (Czar Kolokol), and the useless monster cannon (Czar Putsch), with its four enormous balls, guarding the trophies of the

campaign of 1812, in front of the arsenal, strengthen the conceit that this hallowed spot of the Kremlin is only a colossal joke, the outcome of a civilization still in its infancy.

But the monster of monsters among these marvellous structures lies outside the Kremlin gates, and precisely close to the "Redeemer's Gate"—a holy spot, which no man dares go past with his hat on.

I allude to that church of St. Basil the Blessed, of which Ivan the Terrible, as we have seen, was so proud and so jealous.

Its architect was determined that no part of his building should be in keeping with any other part; and he tortured his brain to bring forth something which, however hideous, should at least not be harmonious or symmetrical, so that oddity might ensure him the merit of novelty and originality.

And his success in this respect is unquestionable. The church is a mass of little chapels without nave or aisles, surmounted by cupolas, spires, and pinnacles, so strangely jumbled together as to make it no easy task to ascertain either their number, or relative position, height, or size. Those queer domes emerge out of the muddle, some of them in the shape of Moors' turbans, others pear-like, artichoke-like, like prickly pears, pine-apples, or melons—all forms which have been reproduced in many of the Moscow new churches—a hundred

fanciful shapes enough to give one a nightmare ; and the whole building on the outside fluted and ribbed, twisted and wreathed, and inlaid with odd-shaped glazed tiles of all imaginable colours, glistening in the sun like a serpent's scales, and producing the effect of the bright grains of coloured sand and broken bits of glass in a kaleidoscope.

Really a work of art that baffles description !

I have seldom stepped into a Russian church : only into the Isaac and Kasan cathedrals at St. Petersburg, and here into the Assumption and the two other cathedrals in the Kremlin ; as well as into the great votive temple of the Saviour, erected on an eminence outside the citadel, and confronting it ; a church built in commemoration of the signal victories of 1812—a stupendous edifice now finished, though not yet opened, after 42 years of labour, and a removal from the original spot on the Valdai hills, where it was found that the soil was giving in under it. The gilding of the five domes alone cost one million of silver roubles.

The church inside is all gold and marble, and has some fine large paintings by native artists. Like the Isaac church, which it emulates, it is spacious and lofty, and less encumbered with that inordinate profusion of ornaments that is characteristic of Russian churches, especially of the old ones, where all is gold, and glitter,

and malachite, and lapis lazuli, and dusky saints' images.

But I looked in vain for an interior of the church of St. Basil the Blessed.

That church is only thrown open to public worship for one day in the year, but I was at a loss to see how a congregation could find room to perform its sacred rites within its walls, if more than two or three, or at the utmost twenty or thirty assembled and met together for that purpose. For the whole body of the church is divided into little chapels, tiny shrines, and narrow passages, forming a labyrinth of dark nooks and corners, some of them with barely room for a confessor and some fair penitent, in strictest privacy, and to the exclusion of profane witnesses.

I do not much care for Russian churches. To move about in them, to see them otherwise than by the pale light of the tapers that seem to be kept burning day and night, is, I found, a weary task, which the limned icons or images on the walls, the relics in their shrines, or the jewelled crosiers and embroidered vestments in the sacristy, or the illuminated mass-books in the choir, do not well repay. One has seen enough of such things in Rome and in Roman Catholic countries, or in the East. If we except its supreme hierarchy, and its relations to the State, the Russian Church is the Greek Church, or it is nothing. Whatever one may think of its dogmas,

its rites, and its miracles, there is certainly nothing in its art that is not feeble imitation or mere copy.

Sight-seeing in Moscow is, besides, tiresome work. It is a town where it is equally painful to walk or to drive. The pavement here is, if possible, worse than that of St. Petersburg, and in many of the most important and crowded thoroughfares there are no side-walks or trottoirs to speak of. No thickness of shoe-soles can make the cruel, sharp-pointed flint stones of the middle of the road endurable to civilized European feet, and pedestrians are almost worse off in Moscow than they would be in Pera-Galata or Stamboul itself. In the Nevski Prospect, and in another street or two in St. Petersburg, American wood-pavement is being laid, and here in Moscow I see some attempts at introducing Parisian asphalté. But the care of the streets in Russia is left to the Municipal Councils; and these bodies, a new institution, created or re-modelled on sufficiently broad, democratic principles, and on the most popular mode of election, do not, in the opinion of their fellow-citizens, work well. The complaint is universal in this country, and, as we well know, not limited to it. Municipal councillors are not paid; and heroic exertions cannot be expected of men who have their own private business, besides public matters, to attend to. "If they are honest," we hear, "these worthies do nothing; but if they are not"—I make the statement on their townsmen's responsibility—"they are

only too active and energetic." Ask any of the people, how it is that the streets are stony-hearted and withal muddy or dusty, that the street lamps are dim, the water undrinkable, the ill-smells all-pervading, and the answer will invariably be: "All we can say is, that we pay rates high enough; but if you wish to see where our money goes, look into our councillors' pockets."

Whereupon I am ready to reply: "But consider that you are the electors. Is it because you know not how to choose, or because there is no better set of men to choose from, that the city, as you assert, seems always to be at the discretion of rogues?" I pause for an answer.

But, when all is said, and allowing that the spot is sacred and full of interest, it would be impossible to describe Moscow as either a handsome or a comfortable city. It has as many a fine *coup d'œil* as Paris itself; and its buildings, if you see them at a distance, without taking them to pieces, may strike a stranger as rare curiosities. But it is vain to look for beauty anywhere; not for such beauty as may aid the progress of art, or take its place among its first-rate performances; vain to look for anything deserving the least attention on the score of true original, however irregular, style. There is nothing that may be called either Greek or Roman, Gothic or Renaissance. You have only a medley of all orders, ancient or modern, corrupted and bastardized.

Away from the Kremlin, out of sight of its cathedrals and palaces, it seems difficult for a traveller in Moscow to fancy himself in a capital or even a large city. There is not what might be called a main square or main street; no square built on its four sides, no street finished or carried to the length it seemed intended to reach.

Moscow is not really a town, but a gathering of towns; mere provincial towns, breaking up and spreading out into big, straggling villages. From the centre to the extremities, from your hotel to the railway station, from the Kremlin to the park, where a National Exhibition is to be opened next spring (1882), there is an hour's walk, if not more. These enormous distances are not peculiar to the Russian capitals or to Russian great cities. Land seems to be of no value in this country. Every town, ancient or modern, is laid out on the most extensive scale; every village, great or small, is made to stretch its one street over an extent of a mile or miles, out of all proportion with the wants and real comforts of the population.

It is true there are, at least, in the towns, the droskies. They are standing at every street-corner, and their horses, mere cobs or ponies, are full of mettle, and on smooth ground, fleet as the wind. Aye! but the ground is nowhere smooth in Russia, in town or country; and the droski is a wretched vehicle, short

and narrow, with no back to the seat, and no room for your knees, where you sit cramped and ill-balanced; and the *isvoshtchik* is a shocking bad driver, clumsy and reckless, and he jolts and rattles you along, shaving round the corners, or bumping against the lamp-posts as if bent on tilting against all he meets, and you sit struggling to keep your seat, and clutching at its rails like grim death, preparing all the way for an upset, which, it is but justice to say, does not always come.

That all matters may mend when the snow is on the ground, and the sledge skips lightly over the frozen ruts, may be perfectly true; but it was now July, and mine was to be a summer tour.

The suburbs of Moscow, when they spread out into rural districts, are not without a beauty and a grace of their own. They are laid out in clusters of villas and cottages, somewhat like the Victoria or Alexandra Parks on the skirts of our manufacturing towns. But these tenements are no homes to their inmates from October to May. They are merely summer residences, thin and flimsy, forsaken in the long winter season. They are generally detached or semi-detached; but always to the front of the grounds they occupy; always staring out in sight of each other, and never curtained by too dense a foliage of trees or shrubs as we love to see them in old England.

They are evidently intended for a people gregarious and sociable even in their ideas of country life, and never going out of town without having as much of the habits and pleasures, and especially of the gossip of the town as they can manage to carry along with them.

CHAPTER IV.

MOSCOW; CHURCH AND PEOPLE.

Religious Instincts of the Russians—Churches, Chapels, and Icons—Wealth of the Clergy—Poverty of the People—Black and White Clergy—Clerical Influence—The Greek and Roman Churches—Orthodoxy and Dissent—The Look of the People—Their Dress.

ALTHOUGH the churches of Moscow, like those of Rome, are as many as there are days in the year, they seem still to be insufficient for the spiritual wants of the Moscovite people. The town has also little chapels open like shops at the street corners, almost in every street, and often facing one another in the same street; more numerous, I do believe, than beer-houses and gin-palaces in London. And there are, besides, *Icons* or images stuck up on every wall, over every door, in the bazaars, at the Exchange, in every public office, in every shop or private house. Every church, every chapel, every image is beset with worshippers, very nearly from morning to night. There is no common labourer or artisan, no water-carrier or droski-driver, that will go past without unbonneting and crossing himself. Many of them will stop and crowd round the sacred building,

standing still for half a minute to alternate jerking bows and signs of the cross in dumb adoration, with an appearance of earnest devotion the like of which I have never witnessed in Latin countries, not even in Rome itself, and in the palmy days of Pius the pope-king.

My first impression was, that this veneration of holy things was limited to the lower classes. But I chanced to be out in a summer storm, and at the first growl of thunder I saw well-dressed people, and "carriage company," standing at the chapel doors in the midst of the crowd, hat in hand, and heedless of the big drops of rain, all ducking their heads, and—as it might seem to profane eyes—whisking the flies from their faces as zealously as any of the Great Unwashed :—

"Cœlo tonante credidimus Jovem."

And in the same manner I found that in Russian churches the congregation consists of at least a score of males to one female; the men, old and young, very grave and attentive, though seldom moving their lips as if in muttered prayer, and only by fits and starts performing their silent gesticulations and genuflexions—a striking contrast to what one sees in France, Italy, or Spain, where only the women kneel at Mass, filling the nave and aisles; while the few "sparks" of the other sex stand jeering and sneering at the doors, waiting for the fair votaries to run the gauntlet of their

quizzing glasses, as they issue with downcast eyes and demure mien from the sacred building.

Portentous, indeed, are the religious instincts of the Russian people, and all-reaching and omnipresent is the institution of the Russian Church. And it were greatly to be desired that its influence should touch the hearts of the people as it seems to captivate their senses and to search their pockets. We hear that the "popes," or parish priests, the white or secular clergy, are starving, and that the monks, or "black," regular clergy, are still suffering from the consequences of the confiscation of their lands and serfs decreed by Peter the Great. But as far as one can see in Moscow, the sanctuary is still a store-house of precious metals and jewels; the churches are attractive by their blaze of burning tapers, by the strains of their psalmody, by the chimes of their deep-toned bells. The Troitsa, or Trinity Monastery, two hours by rail from Moscow, boasts 10 churches within its precincts, shrines of 1000lbs. of pure silver, rows of carved figures of solid gold, priestly vestments worth £11,000; besides pearls, diamonds, and sapphires by the bushel, in sufficient quantity to furnish forth the regalia of many an imperial dynasty. And the same wonders could be told of the *Lavras*, or monasteries of St. Petersburg, of Kief, and of the sanctuary of Solovetsk on the White Sea.

All these monastic establishments are visited by

thousands of pilgrims, whose offerings more than compensate the cloisters for the loss of the thousands of serfs which they formerly possessed. Many a church and many a chapel supply their priests' wants by the present of tapers laid by the faithful before their shrines. There is a church in St. Petersburg, the income of which, from the wax trade alone, amounts to 11,000 roubles.

Every one has heard of the *Bambino* of Rome, that doll of the nuns of Ara Cœli on the Capitol, whose presence by a lady's bedside is considered her best safeguard in her hour of trial. But here, in Moscow, we have scores of images, mostly madonnas, many of them the handiwork of the painter-evangelist, St. Luke, almost daily called out to give proofs in private houses of the miraculous powers which they exhibit in behalf of suffering humanity at their chapel doors.

But not one of them is fit to "hold the candle" to the *Iverskaia Mater*, or Iberian Mother, brought hither from Georgia and from Mount Athos, and lodged in her shrine at the Vokresendi gate near the Kremlin.

This heavenly lady never drives out from her chapel except in her coach and six, and only for patients that can pay a fee of 100 roubles for each visit—a clear evidence that her business, as well as that of the whole establishment, has been marvellously looking up of late; for I learn from my old friend, J. G. Kohl, that he remembers the time, about 40 years ago, when

this same Image used to go about in a plain carriage drawn by only four horses, and for a consideration of 25 roubles a job; an equipage and *honorarium* with which now-a-days only the *Deæ Minores* of the wonder-working sisterhood would be willing to put up.

In spite of this boundless wealth of the Church, or perhaps in consequence of it, there is much apparent, and possibly much real, suffering among the lower orders in Moscow.

This, be it remembered, is an industrial community. Its factories, about half a century ago, already employed 22,000 working men. But in 1875, when the numbers of its inhabitants had risen from 300,000 to 612,000 souls, the factories had become 550 (93 cotton-spinning and weaving, 43 cloth and worsted mills, 46 mixed spinning mills and dye works, 26 silk mills, etc.), altogether supplying work and wages to 38,000 persons, and producing goods of the value of £7,000,000.

But admitting all this, and granting that any statistics of the Russian empire may be relied upon for at least approximate correctness, it would not do away with the sorrowful fact that the town is swarming with beggars in every street, their numbers being about ten times as great as they appear in St. Petersburg.

This may be owing to a variety of causes, and especially to the fact that the police in this city must naturally show more remissness in the discharge of their

duty than they would do under the supervision of the Central Government, where mendicancy is at least kept out of sight; but I observed that, even in St. Petersburg, mendicancy is driven into the churches; and it seems evident that there it thrives under the patronage of the priests, who insist on making the House of God, if not exactly a den of thieves, the next thing to it—the nursery and school of beggars; in which case it is not surprising that Moscow, being the holiest city, should also be the most infested by this human vermin; and, in fact, you cannot enter a church or chapel here without being faced by half a score of sturdy rascals with whining women and children, through the midst of whom you must make your way as you can; the priests seeming determined that, whether or not they can muster a congregation, “the poor they will always have with them.”

There is much good, I do believe, in the character of the Russian people. They are long-suffering and easily contented, ready to do enough work, if they are kept to it, and if it is made worth their while. They are the best-natured creatures under the sun; always merry and sociable, and never so friendly and affectionate as when they have more liquor on board than they can carry. I have been several weeks among them, and I have never seen anything like an incipient quarrel, or even heard high words anywhere. Their

besetting sins are idleness and drunkenness, and it cannot easily be denied, that for these vices, as well as for mendicancy, the priests are in a great measure responsible: the priests who multiply their church festivities to such an extent, as to compel the faithful to keep holy as many as 170 days in the year,—16 in the month of August alone,—without reckoning the Sundays; the priests who, while imposing rigid fasts for as many days as they have feasts, and thus sapping the vigour and wearing out the very soul of working men, have never a word to say against the use and abuse of that *vodka*, or strong water, to which the labourers are driven by the delusive hope that liquor may make up for the deficiency of wholesome food.

I have been long enough in Moscow to see the streets towards evening, on Sundays and on other holidays, full of men reeling in the last stage of intoxication, and unfit, as a matter of course, to resume their tasks at shops or workshops on the following morning.

Would that any man might have so much influence on these blue-eyed, long-haired, thick-bearded, solemn and demure "popes," and on the Emperor, who is their "Patriarch," as to convince them that the world would not fall, nor would the Almighty be displeased, if they were to strike off two-thirds of the saints from their calendar; and, above all things, if they were to

preach against the people's ruinous practice of keeping St. Monday.

But the fact is, that the Russian Church has neither the will nor the power to exercise a beneficial influence over the people. And for the matter of the vodka, were the priests to preach against it they would have to add the clause, "Do as I say, not as I do;" for the clergy, of the lowest ranks at least, unless they are greatly maligned, seem by no means disposed to enforce the precept of sobriety by their example.

The Russian Church is an exotic in Russia. It was imported from Greece, and it was ruled by the patriarch of Constantinople till the sixteenth century, and was a self-governing body till Peter the Great abolished the patriarchate, and submitted it to a synod, whose authority is under the control of the emperor and his ministers; as is still that of every other body in the empire, whatever efforts may have been made to reconcile autonomy with autocracy.

It is a Church of outward observances, of showy ceremonies, fasts, and pilgrimages—a mere show where hardly any appeal is ever made to the heart or the understanding. Even Dean Stanley, who wrote on the subject with that leniency and charity which was laid to his charge as latitudinarianism, finds fault with the Russian Church for its "separation of religion from morality." But if religion do not act as a rule

of moral conduct, one may ask, what is the use of it? or what reverence can a priest inspire if he only relies for it on gorgeous church millinery, and not on his example and personal character?

The Russian Church has been weighed in the same scale with the Roman Catholic by Protestant writers, who have not well considered the different circumstances through which the two establishments had to pass.

The Roman Church was both dominant and militant from the outset. It ruled the state in Rome; it fought with it in all other western countries; it put forth dictatorial, absolute pretensions, set herself above all scriptural and apostolical traditions, claimed infallibility, and aimed at omnipotence.

The Greek Church, on the other hand, was always dependent on the Eastern emperors till the fall of Constantinople, when indeed the Turks allowed her some shadow of self-government, but placed her in that respect in the same conditions as all her Eastern rivals. By the spread of her Russian branch into the north, the Greek Church passed under the sway of princes who, on the sole condition that she should be submissive to their orders and subservient to their interests, allowed her full discretion in her dealing with their subjects, and undertook to enforce her authority and guard her from the hostility of heresies or schisms.

The Russian Church thus obtained peace at the price of freedom. Relying on the support of the secular arm, she abated her zeal and activity, and all intent on her worldly advantages, she showed no taste for polemics or proselytism, and evinced an indifference that was too readily mistaken for tolerance.

The Roman Church, launched upon her ambitious career, waged incessant war against sovereigns and peoples, showed a morbid jealousy of dissent and free thought, and had to withstand the shock of German reformations and French revolutions, of social and moral interests implacably arrayed against her, and she shrank from no violent measures, from no compromise with her principles or derogation from her sacred character that could lend her support in the doubtful conflict.

The Russian Church had no one with whom to settle her accounts but the Czar. She was eaten up with dissent, it is true; the innovations introduced into the ritual by the patriarch Nikon, during the reign of the Czar Alexis, the weak predecessor of Peter the Great, and the high-handed measures of this latter in the abolition of the patriarchate, and the assertion of the State's supremacy over the Church—caused a split in the body of the faithful, and divided it into an official and a popular Church, this latter consisting of the so-called "Old Believers," a set of men who

equally protested against the doings of Nikon and of Peter the Great.

These dissenters were, of course, never acknowledged either by the Church or by the State. They had no regular priesthood, and hardly any settled creed or form of worship. They went through many divisions and subdivisions, and in some instances they adopted the views of bolder sectarians, such as the Malokani, or milk-drinkers; the Eunuchs, or white doves; the Flagellants, self-burners, and other fanatics, whose heresies were very old, and generally of foreign importation.

The difference between the Church and the sane part of these dissenters, and especially of the Old Believers, did not, however, turn on any important matter of faith or morals. It was limited to a strong objection to unmeaning forms and rites, and to a determined adherence to harmless practices, which in no manner affected the Christian dogma, or influenced the rule of Christian life. The Old Believers stuck to the old way of holding the fingers of the right hand in crossing themselves; they drank no wine, did not smoke, and were looked upon as a more sober and honest set of men than their orthodox fellow-subjects. But they had also their own peculiar views of the government of Church and State. They anathematized the memory of Nikon and Peter, looked upon this latter

as anti-Christ, and on autocratic government as anti-Christian.

The Holy Synod of St. Petersburg, and the Imperial Government, were ill-acquainted with the notions and instincts of these dissenters, and showed great inconsistency in dealing with them. The Emperor Nicholas, for instance, insisted on basing his Church on strict and exclusive orthodoxy, and tried persecution, banishment to Siberia, and all the severe measures characteristic of his ultra-despotic government. The consequence was, that all dissent vanished at once, and the edge of the sword was soon blunted by the yielding attitude of the offenders whom it was intended to strike. For the Old Believers either shifted their homes to the remotest and most inhospitable regions of the empire, or made semblance of giving in to authority, and openly recanted, but with "mental reserve," or made their peace with the Church by bribing the needy parish clergy to ignore and screen them, and acted, in short, like "men convinced against their will, who are of the same opinion still."

So inefficient were the means employed by the Emperor Nicholas in accomplishing his ends, that at the close of his reign the Old Believers were supposed to muster, according to some accounts, 10 to 12, according to other, 16 to 17,000,000 strong; while more liberal calculators declared that they constituted

one-half, two-thirds, and even four-fifths of the population of the empire.

The Emperor Alexander II., son and successor of Nicholas, a man of benevolent but soft disposition, came to the throne with intentions antagonistic to his father's views, and with a vague and not well settled resolution to undo his father's work. He announced a reign of peace, decreed the emancipation of the serfs, reformed several branches of the administration, and proclaimed religious freedom, so far, at least, as the right of private conscience was concerned. In all his liberal measures the imperial reformer naturally met with more or less determined opposition of the conservative parties, and had on many points to retrace his steps, and tacitly to admit his impotence. For what concerns religion especially he found his synod less amenable to views of mercy than Nicholas had found them disposed to adopt measures of rigour; so that the liberty on which the Old Believers had reckoned turned out little better than a delusion and a snare.

The consequence of this was, that while the dissenters were allowed to count each other and take a correct estimate of their strength, they at the same time became aware of the precariousness of their position, of the hollowness of the truce they hoped to have come to with the establishment, and of the necessity of proceeding with the same caution and discretion, with the same

concealment and disguise, to which open persecution had long compelled them.

The result was the spread and confirmation of those habits of simulation and dissimulation which are perhaps instinctive with all Eastern races, but which became inveterate among the Russian people under the influence of an uncompromising and unsparing despotism.

The upshot of all is, that if I go out into the Moscow streets, if I stand before one of the popular chapels, I must needs come to the conclusion that all that multitude, so earnest and unanimous in the show of its devotion, is wholly and exclusively orthodox, and that all I heard or read about the millions and millions of nonconformists is simply a myth.

And in the same manner, if I look upon the quiet and peaceful behaviour of the people of all classes, if I listen to their light and cheerful talk, their ready laugh, their free and easy manners, their open and often vacant countenances, I find it difficult to persuade myself, either that their discontent is very deep, or their hostility to the constituted authority fraught with serious danger. A race of beings less capable of revolutionary outbreaks, anti-semitic riots or other disorders at all times, or less disposed to them at the present moment, it would not be easy to imagine. And I also see nowhere the darkening brow, the stealthy look, the changing colours, the hundred signs and acts by which a lot of secret

conspirators would seem likely to betray the consciousness of their tenebrous designs.

And yet who would trust appearances? If under that outward show of general orthodoxy dissent, to the extent of millions and millions of Old Believers, can hide or disguise itself, how can any one be sure that amongst that crowd of orderly, and seemingly happy, loyal and obedient subjects may not lurk scores of Jew-slayers or Nihilists?

Independently of the innate peculiarities of race, one may believe that the influence of the Church entered for not a little into the formation of that suppleness and adroitness which belongs most distinctly to the Russians as a people, and which makes them, as a rule, the best of diplomatists. The Eastern Church, the offspring of the Greek mind, has almost invariably resorted to quibble and chicane when she was at all hampered by that stubborn letter of the Scriptures which the Roman Church unceremoniously and almost defiantly set aside.

Rome, for instance, never scrupled to treat with contempt the precept, "Thou shalt not make to thyself any *graven image*"; and her churches are museums both of statues and pictures. Greece looked upon that prohibition as only relating to works of sculpture, and affected to see no harm in filling the House of God with *painted* images. Then she considered that the commandment said nothing about *graven clothes*, and she encased her limned icons in gold and silver drapery embossed in

high relief, the icon being thus half picture, half sculpture; and by this compromise she flattered herself that she had driven a coach-and-six through what she nominally acknowledged as God's law.

In the same manner, though both Churches professed to hold matrimony in honour, and made it a sacrament, both set up celibacy as a holier state of existence. But the Roman Church, when she wished to have her priesthood in hand as a more efficient instrument to work out her purposes, boldly exacted perpetual vows of chastity from all of them without distinction. The Greek Church, in pursuance of the same views, but with more craft, imposed the same rules on her *black* clergy, the monks, and on the prelates and other dignitaries promoted from their ranks. But she allowed her priests, the *white* clergy, not exactly to marry, but to keep their wives, bidding them to contract marriages before ordination, and practically directing them to choose their brides among the daughters of priestly families—an arrangement which answered two purposes: it gave her in her black clergy a staunch and well-disciplined militia, like that of Rome; but, besides, it organized her white clergy in a kind of Levitical caste, which placed them apart from the laity, and bound them to her interests.

Of all the slyness and acuteness with which the Russian people are credited, I cannot say that I saw very clear symptoms in the faces of the labourers, artisans, and

others I met in the streets of Moscow. The Russians, in the low ranks of life, and with few exceptions, are not a handsome race. They are a mixture of Slavic, Finnish, and Tartar tribes, none of them considered the best type of either male or female beauty. Many of the men are small and puny, with remarkably plain features, and a dingy, shallow complexion; but neither in their fishy eyes nor in their flaxy eyebrows can one detect any other expression than that of a placid and somewhat stolid simplicity; so that, if there is roguery in them, it has the advantage of hiding itself under an impenetrable mask of seeming honesty. Smooth waters run deep.

The women are somewhat better: not that their features are very regular, or at all regular; but their eyes are lively and their smile piquant, and they seem to have a mind and will of their own, which the stronger sex apparently lack. Actual first-rate beauty, however, is very rare here. One may walk about these streets day after day, and never feel tempted to look twice at any woman's face that may happen to catch the eye. And it was the same in St. Petersburg, where the only really splendid creature I met was at the railway terminus when on the point of starting for Moscow; and even she, faultless as she was as to face and figure, had a milk-white complexion, without a shade of that pink which would so naturally have become her early youth. It is obvious that, besides the climate, which dooms poor as well as rich to

seclusion for one half of the year within heated chambers, there must be something in the air, the water, or the drainage of both these Russian capitals that is not favourable to the healthful development of the native race. The peasantry and the working-classes are usually strong ; but they are hardened by the severe ordeal they have to undergo in early life, to which so great a multitude of children and delicate young women succumb.

With respect to the residents from other countries, they do not seem to suffer much from these inconveniences, and are apt to complain rather of the dulness than of the actual unhealthiness of the country. For a year or two they think little of the severity of the Russian climate, and go briskly about, lightly clad and thinly shod, on snow and ice, wondering whether they should pity or laugh at the extreme sensitiveness of the natives, as these creep along, heavy and torpid, buried under mountains of furs. But, in most instances, their fine spirits are soon tamed, or they have often to repent their rashness and bravado—if no worse evil befall them—by the forfeit of their frost-bitten noses and ears.

There is something peculiar, but nothing very sumptuous or picturesque, in the costume of a Russian crowd. Many of the illusions which a traveller brings with him from his readings are here somewhat rudely dispelled. "Of the silken garments of the Bokharian or Persian,"

of the "dangling tail of the Chinaman," of the "pearly teeth of the Arabian," of the "wild-looking savages and skin-clad Esquimaux," which writers of fifty years since described as ordinary sights of the streets of St. Petersburg and Moscow, you see now as little as of the Cyclopes of Ulysses, or of the Lestrigons of Sir John Mandeville. Even further east, on the border of Asia, Tartars, Armenians, and Persians are only distinguishable by their fur-caps a little higher or a little lower, turban-shaped or mitre-shaped. But for the quaintness of old Moscovitic costume or gorgeous Eastern finery, a man must now-a-days be referred to picture-books or museums. The tendency of our age is to Frenchify the very gorillas.

The only article that distinguishes the Russian from any European, and especially from an English, crowd is the head-gear; for the cylinder, or tall hat, seems to be held in universal abhorrence, and is hardly ever seen anywhere, at least at this season, even on foreign heads and in bureaucratic and cosmopolitan St. Petersburg. And this, not so much, probably, because a hundred years ago the crazy Emperor Paul waged a ruthless war against those hats, as well as against shoe-strings, in his Ukases, as because winter would forbid their use, under the penalty above-named, for six months in the year; and the habit of one season sets the people here against the wear of our awkward, irrational, and

unbecoming chimney-pot for the remainder of the twelve-month.

The Russian costume of the lower classes consists of a black or white cap, with the brim drawn down on the brow and almost on the very eyes; a long, loose, shapeless, dark blue or brown great-coat, flowing down to the heels, and heavy top-boots up to the knees. In the case of well-to-do peasants fresh from the country, you may catch here and there, between the folds of the great coat, a sight of the red blouse, or of the broad red sash and black velvet breeches which were once popular in rural districts. But, as a rule, the dark long gaberdine hides everything; and, bating the colour or tissue, the same medley of international rags seems equally to suit Russian or Tartar, Moslem or Christian, gipsy or Jew. Merchants and brokers and idlers of the middle classes wear the cut-away jacket and wide-awake hat now common to all Europe. Gentlemen of the higher ranks are at this moment mostly out of town; when in town they appear either in military or civilian uniform, and they also throw over it their heavy riding-cloaks, regardless of the stifling heat. For indeed nothing is more common than to see rich and poor, old and young, cumbered with large fur-coats and caps throughout the dog-days.

The funny pork-pie hat worn by the droski-drivers in St. Petersburg and Moscow seems to lose favour as

you travel eastwards, where the *isvoshtchik* buries his head and half his face in his ugly black hanging cap, unless he prefers the Tartar fur turban.

The Russians are as hirsute a race as any Asiatic. Those of the lower classes, whether out of ancient Moscovitic pride, or to spite the shade of Peter the Great, the Great Shaver, are rejoicing in such full, long beards as might well excite the envy of their Mongolian fellow-subjects. Some few have a mane at the back of the head down to the shoulders; but for most of them the hair is clipped in a straight line by the barber, a primitive artist, who claps an iron-pot on them over head and ears when they go to him for a half-yearly shearing, and trims round and round whatever protrudes from the pot. The line of hair, as it grows up again month after month, sticks out round the cap like a mat. Hair and beard are usually unkempt and tangled—a fit frame to the face, where a coating of several weeks' dirt neutralizes the colour of the skin.

The clergy are easily distinguishable among the crowd, not only by their costume, but also by their mien and bearing; for many of them are tall and handsome, with blue eyes, and sleek, tawny hair and beard unclipped, and they have a grave and sedate air and manner of walking that nothing seems ever to fluster or discompose. The monks, or black clergy, wear long, flowing robes, and tall, cylindrical caps, from which a

veil falls down, partly covering their countenance. The mere parish priests (white clergy) are dressed in the same manner, but wear no veil. Town priests are, as a rule, clean and tidy in their habits; but country parsons are often too poor and slovenly to be over-particular either as to the colour or the cut or the stainlessness of their garments.

CHAPTER V.

REVEL.

Baltic Russia—The Finland Gulf—The Baltic Railways— The Baltic Provinces—Esthonia—Narva—Visit to an Esthonian Cotton Mill—Capital and Labour applied to Industry—Visit to an Esthonian Nobleman's Estate—Capital and Labour applied to Agriculture.

ALTHOUGH the Czar Peter the Great built his city at the very gate of his empire, he never meant to fix there its boundary. Both that Autocrat himself and his successors moved their landmarks westward at the expense of their neighbours, till they had made of the whole Gulf of Finland a magnificent outer vestibule to their gate.

As the sea-loving traveller steams out into that gulf, leaving the delta of the Neva and the island fortress of Cronstadt behind him, he has the granite cliffs of Finland on his right hand, and the limestone bluffs of Esthland, or Esthonia, on his left. On the north he coasts Swedish Russia, past Wiborg, past Helsingfors and Hangö — a distance of 18 hours by steam; and on the opposite, or southern side, are the

ports of Narva, Revel, or Reval (for the Russians write the name with *e* and pronounce it *a*), and Balticport.

All Finland, with Lapland to the Arctic Sea, and all Esthonia, Livonia, and Courland to the German frontier at Memel, I take the liberty to designate as "Baltic Russia."

Besides the water-way of the gulf, railway lines run now from St. Petersburg all along its shores on both sides; and when I made up my mind for a trip to the Baltic provinces, my preference for a land journey, whenever and wherever it be practicable, induced me to make a start by taking the train at the terminus of the Baltic line at St. Petersburg, which travels down to Narva, Revel, and Balticport in 13 hours.

We left St. Petersburg at the close of a glorious summer day, as the golden domes of the city churches flashed fire in the setting sun, and the waters of the Neva danced with a joyous ripple, their indigo hues deepening in the amber twilight till they had all the brightness and darkness of the Rhone as it flows out of Lake Lemman at Geneva.

The character of the country in the Russo-German provinces does not differ materially from that of the districts near St. Petersburg and Moscow which I had lately traversed. It is everywhere the same bleakness and loneliness. Yet even this dreary, apparently God-forsaken, Esthonian land is "not so bad as it seems."

At this season it is busy hay-making, and will soon be reaping and threshing. Its fields make up by vastness for their deficient fertility. The quantity of such staple produce as the climate affords, rye and potato, procures for its owners the commodities and luxuries which ripen under milder skies. And the attachment of the people to a country which seems to us so forbidding is no less strong in the few fortunate ones who can wander at pleasure in more favoured regions, than in the helpless multitude once by serfdom and now by poverty bound to their father-land.

Our first halt was at Narva, on the confines between Ingria (or Ingermanland) and Esthonia, *i. e.* between Russian and German Russia.

The place lies near the mouth of the Narova, which forms its port—Port of Narva—about six miles off. The Narova, a frontier stream, flowing out of Lake Peipus, divides the town into Russian and Esthonian Narva. A picturesque old castle on either side bears witness to the hostilities that were carried on for centuries by the people in possession of the opposite banks. Narva teems with remembrances and traditions of Peter the Great, who had here his long tussle with Poles and Swedes, suffering a crushing defeat in the first encounter, in 1700; but retrieving his fortunes five years later, and ending by the final conquest of the whole littoral at the Peace of Nystadt in 1721.

At the distance of about a verst, or kilometer, above Narva the river makes a great leap of seven or eight meters, coming down in a roaring cataract fully as grand and majestic as the fall of the Rhine at Schaffhausen, and bringing down, perhaps, a larger volume of water.

Peter the Great, we are told, with the utilitarian turn of mind which characterized him, had conceived some design of turning the power thus yielded by nature to the profit of human industry; but the realization of such projects, if he, indeed, entertained them, was put off for about a century, and it is only in our days that the neighbourhood of Narva has become a manufacturing centre, in some respects surpassing in magnitude all establishments of the same nature in the Russian empire.

Our first visit was to the great cotton mill at Kränhholm.

Kränhholm, or Crow Island, is a huge rock rising athwart the stream, and breaking the fall into two cataracts, which again mingle their waters at the foot of it. It is a spot contrived by nature as one of her most sublime achievements, and the beauty of it cannot be altogether defaced even by all the encroachments of man's prosaic handiwork.

A locality strikingly similar I have seen at Isola del Liri, near Sora, in Terra di Lavoro, South Italy, where

the waters of the Liri fall on either side of a rock island, and where also the divided stream is made subservient to the interests of trade by turning the wheels of woollen, cloth, and paper mills.

The establishment at Krähnholm is a cotton-spinning and weaving mill, and is, or will soon become, the largest in the world.

It was founded in 1856, at a cost already exceeding one million sterling, by a well-known merchant of Bremen—a man whose name exercises quite a talismanic sway throughout commercial and industrial Russia. His two sons at Moscow, and his agents in almost all the large cities of the empire, men whom he chooses with the happy instinct which guided Napoleon in the appointment of his lieutenants, have been extremely obliging to me wherever I went, and proved to be my most reliable instructors in all matters relating to the industrial and commercial conditions of the country.

The moving force at the Krähnholm mill, all supplied by water, acts through three enormous turbines, each of 1080 horse power, besides other smaller turbines, and an old-fashioned horizontal wheel, altogether raising the strength of the moving engines to 5100 horse power.

The turbines and all their appurtenances were made in Augsburg; the spinning and weaving machines came from Manchester, and are constructed with all the skill

and economy of the most recent contrivances and improvements.

The mill consists of two vast buildings, four stories high, with considerable out-houses, to which yearly additions are made. It consumes 40,000 bales, or 7562 tons of cotton yearly. It produced last year, 1880, 6518 tons of yarn, and 609,796 pieces, or 1998 tons of various tissues. In 1875 it employed 3939 hands; their number is now 4827.

The establishment, I was told, though to me it seems hardly credible, yields an interest of 50 per cent. on the capital invested.

From the manufactory at Krähnholm, which the guide books ignore, we proceeded to two other establishments, which those books describe, and for which I think I may refer my readers to them, as the works are of much less importance. They are a woollen cloth and a flax mill, both situated on the Esthonian bank of the river below the cataract. They were founded by a Russo-German baron, and lately sold to a joint-stock company. The first supplied cloth for the officers of the Russian army; the other chiefly produced sail-cloth, for which there is a demand both at home and abroad. The flax mill is under Scotch management.

And I must say, once for all, that I have seen no industrial establishment in any part of Russia which did not depend on foreign—chiefly German, British, or

French—intelligence and character for its organization and governance.

I must also confess, that the results of such enterprises, wherever I see them, interest me less than the means by which they are obtained. What I am anxious to learn is, how much those or similar establishments contribute to solve the great question of the mutual relations between capital and labour; or, in other words, what is done by the mill-owners towards the health, contentment, and improvement of their working people. For there is no doubt in my mind that there must for ever be hard work in the world; that labour will in a great measure always be dependent on capital; and that if in many flagrant cases capital abuses the power that its position gives it, it is rather to gross ignorance than to inhumanity that the evil is owing.

Apart from all philanthropic considerations, it ought to be for a mill-owner's self-interest to do his best for his operatives; to have at least as much charity and consideration for them as a wise husbandman has for his dumb cattle; and inasmuch as the dealing with mere brutes is different in various countries,—in England, for instance, from what it is in Italy or Spain, and as brutality among these latter people arises from sheer stupidity rather than from want of kind-heartedness,—it seems to me worth inquiring how far working-men in different mills meet not only with a loving and humane

disposition, but also with common intelligence on the part of their employers.

In this respect I must say that I have nowhere seen better management than I found in Russia in the Krähnholm manufactory; but it is right to add that, although Narva is Russian ground, the Krähnholm mill owes its origin to a German, a man gifted with brain as well as with a heart, and that although the workmen are either Russians or native Esths, of the men trusted with their guidance there is not one who is not an alien.

The mill, as we have seen, has in its pay nearly 5000 men, women, and children—the latter never less than twelve years old. It is a little community in itself, its grounds spreading over several scores of acres, the workmen's habitations clustering in scattered colonies around, and constituting as many villages, where families may live jointly or in separate cottages at pleasure. With respect to baths and wash-houses, to warming and cooking apparatus, flower and kitchen gardens, schools, libraries, and reading-rooms, hospitals and infant homes, and whatever else may contribute to comfort and convenience, all has been contrived with a minute and patient—quite a Teutonic—attention which I have never seen equalled; the principle upon which the establishment is grounded tending to combine the greatest well-being of the working-men with their most perfect freedom.

The operative is at liberty to take or leave what the

owner supplies. The men receive their wages in cash, and provide for themselves. They can have wholesome and pleasant habitations at very moderate rents within the grounds, or live in the town and elsewhere at their choice, the company encouraging and aiding them to keep co-operative stores among themselves, to protect them from the extortions and adulterations of the local tradespeople.

The average monthly wages are 14 paper roubles for a spinner and 16 roubles for a weaver; but we are told "a good spinner may earn as much as 35 roubles a month, and a good weaver 30 roubles." The mill opens at five o'clock in the morning and closes at eight in the evening, with allowance of half-an-hour for breakfast and an hour and a half for dinner. The working hours are furthermore shortened by two hours on Saturday evening. On Sunday the mill, of course, remains closed.

The task, in my opinion, is heavy, though the long summer day affords still many hours for recreation and instruction; and in the winter season the workmen would scarcely know how to dispose of the leisure hours of the endless northern night.

Altogether, the establishment made upon me the impression of a happy family. The workmen, though different in race and language, live together in peace and unity, exhibiting all outward signs of docility and

intelligence, cheerfulness and contentment. There is little or no drunkenness, and the service of the police is a perfect sinecure. As a proof of the sober, thrifty, and provident habits of these work-people, I need but state that the total sum of the deposit at the Savings Bank, which only amounted to 62,955 roubles in 1875, and 88,654 roubles in 1876, has risen this year, 1881, to 205,220 roubles.

After thus satisfying myself as to the conditions of an industrial establishment in Esthonia, I proceeded to look into the working of a large agricultural estate in the same province.

I took the train to the westward, and on my way from Narva to Revel I alighted at one of the minor stations between the two towns, on a visit to a nobleman, in whom I was assured I should find one of the finest specimens of an old Esthonian baron now living.

I found at the station, where I had telegraphed for a post carriage, a rough country cart, drawn by three shaggy but wiry post-horses, harnessed abreast, according to the practice general in Russia; where, I may add, post-horses, and all horses, are by far the best, as the roads are almost invariably the very worst I have ever seen in any country. In this equipage I was conveyed, safe and sound, though not without much jolting, over the 30 versts of ground which separated me from the nobleman's residence.

Like everybody else at this season, this gentleman was at the sea-baths; not however at any of the fashionable watering-places, where his peers usually congregate, but at his own marine villa, within his own estate—a charming spot, with extensive grounds, laid out with taste, English park fashion, among the pines of the ancestral forest, at the foot of a lofty long ridge, a kind of natural bulwark, commanding a broad expanse of the Finland Gulf.

The letter which was to announce my arrival had, by some untoward accident, miscarried; and the telegram I had sent from Narva only bore my signature, that of a perfect stranger, with a name utterly unknown to the family. I felt some awkwardness about having to introduce myself and telling my errand; but the only alternative would have been to go back, which would not exactly have suited my usual practice or present purpose.

I found the owner, Count —, a tall, thin personage, eighty years old, yet unbent by age, standing at the house-door, holding my telegram in his hand, and trying to spell out my name, which gave him not even any clear inkling about my nationality.

By his side, on his right hand, was his son, the manager of the estate, also a tall, stalwart figure; and on his left, and behind him, other gentlemen, guests or dependents. The ladies of the house, old and young,

with a bevy of children and grand-children, came out, singly or in groups, from the house or from various parts of the garden ; keeping aloof, and gazing at the stranger, with some curiosity about the results of the interview.

A few words of explanation sufficed. The young Count shook me cordially by the hand ; the old Count, who evidently in any emergency was wont to look up to his son for his line of conduct, followed suit ; and instantly the whole household came up with outstretched hands, joining like a chorus in the greetings which were being exchanged between the principal persons in the action.

Simple and hearty are the manners, plain and plentiful the cheer, unbounded the hospitality, of these good Esthonians, and it is as natural to feel at home amongst them as it is comfortable to bask in the genial warmth of their summer sun, or to thaw in the glow of their stove-heated winter apartments.

After a welcome lunch the younger man drove me out in the family coach—a roomy, open, square vehicle, with inner and outer seats on either side and behind, drawn by a fine team of four roan horses harnessed abreast—over six miles of broad avenue to the capital of the estate.

This was a palace in the Italian style, above a century old, with a six-column portico in front, and a

projecting wing at either end ; with a lofty hall and staircase, and a suite of state apartments in the upper floor, hung round with family portraits—a goodly array of generals, admirals, and high dignitaries, distinguished, the elder generations in the Swedish, the later in the Russian, service ; besides chamberlains, equerries, and courtiers of both sexes—one of the ladies having been raised to wear the crown as Swedish queen.

In spite of their ancient Swedish descent and traditions, the family, like many other noble ones in Esthonia, are thoroughly Germanized, and the Swedish language has completely died away among them.

The young Count took me over the grounds and premises, showing me his cattle, his horses, his stables, and cow-houses, his rabbit-warren, his still-house (an important building), his pet rein-deer, the large stock of poultry, ducks, and pigeons, of all breeds—his especial care, affording him profit as well as pastime ; the grounds, from what I saw, somewhat untidy ; the mansion bearing what might be considered in England a forlorn and dilapidated look ; but the furniture old and rich ; the estate a broad domain more than 70 versts in extent, somewhat damaged by the spendthrift habits of former generations, but under the present wise and thrifty *régime* being made to yield an income of £4000 a year.

For in Esthonia, as everywhere in Northern Russia,

the bane of agriculture lies in the vastness rather than in the barrenness of the land, admitting no careful and high-finished cultivation, with no fencing or manuring, and taking as much from the land as it will yield without giving it aught in return.

No wonder, on such terms, if a fine lady in Moscow told me, "While in England your landed property seldom pays more than $2\frac{1}{2}$ to 3 per cent., for our own part, unless we make at least 10 per cent. out of our broad acres we are not pleased." But it is also true that the acres here are very broad, and are to be had at no great cost.

My purpose in travelling through these provinces of Baltic Russia was to learn something of their social and economical conditions, and to see to what extent they manage to maintain those rights and privileges of self-government which give them an exceptional position in the Russian Empire.

The Baltic provinces to the south of the Finland Gulf are, Esthonia all along the Gulf itself, Livonia and Courland more to the south and west, enclosing the Gulf of Riga; and the last-named province extending along the sea-coast down to the Prussian frontier at Memel.

These countries were, ages ago, inhabited by races of Esths, Lettes, and others, said to have wandered hither from Central Asia, and to have been conquered by

German adventurers, known as "Brothers of the Sword," and more lately by the knights of the Teutonic Order.

Like the Jesuits in Paraguay and in other "Misiones" of South America, these German knights brought in Christianity, such as it was, among the natives, but made them pay dearly for it by reducing them to slavery or serfdom, and compelling them to work for their instructors' benefit. Upon the dispersion and extinction of the Military Order, the provinces became a bone of contention between Lithuania and Poland, Sweden and Denmark, and at last Russia came in and ultimately asserted her sway over Esthonia and Livonia at the Peace of Nystadt, in 1721, and incorporated Courland upon the last partition of Poland, in 1795.

Many of the old knightly families, both German and Swedish, however, maintained their hold on their estates, and many more of the same nations came in under sovereign patronage to settle among them. All these, acknowledged as vassals of the Crown, continued to keep their peasants as serfs, bound to the soil, allowing them land, for which they exacted payment by *corvée*, or forced labour, and exercising full and absolute jurisdiction, both singly and collectively, over them.

The nobles settled their own affairs among themselves, on the footing of equality, and on the terms

of unlimited sovereignty over their rural dependents. They administered justice without appeal; their lands paid no taxes; their families were exempt from military service; they were the only producers and sellers of strong liquors, exercising a monopoly which in Russia was reserved to the Crown; and their properties were sent down from father to son by *majorats*, or entails perpetuating with their wealth their authority, and limiting it to a kind of caste or clique.

The nobles had their Diets or "Colleges" in the capitals of their respective provinces. They admitted no strangers to the privileges of their rank, except in very rare instances, and by a large majority of their own votes; and were, in short, as close and exclusive an aristocratic body as ever was known to exist anywhere in Europe.

Several of their privileges, as we shall see, and especially their exemption from military conscription, have either fallen into desuetude, or have been forcibly abolished by the Imperial Government; and, after a series of riots and revolts among the serfs, the nobility found it for their own advantage to manumit their bondsmen, coming to terms with them, and, after a fifteen years' apprenticeship, turning their enslaved peasants into free labourers, allowing them lands as farms upon payment in money; and, for their own part, paying cash for any work they may require of their

former serfs, and which these latter may volunteer to take in hand.

Thus was achieved in these Baltic provinces, without serious disturbance or displacement of the population, in the early part of the century (1804—1831), a pacific revolution, which was attempted in later years (1834—1861) in the other provinces of Russia, and with, as yet, doubtful issue.

The main difference in the result is owing to the facts that here in the Baltic provinces the nobles settled the matter themselves, while in Russia abolition was in a great measure imposed by the Government under conditions which were only accepted under protest; and also, that while in Russia many of the great landowners are absentees,—and spend their time and money at Court in St. Petersburg, or at Paris, Florence, or Monte Carlo,—in Esthonia and the sister provinces the nobles, like many of the landed proprietors in England, reside, and always did reside, on their estates, in constant and immediate intercourse with their land-labourers, knowing everything about their wants, and maintaining with them those relations of mutual sympathy, good understanding, and interdependence which constituted the bright side of patriarchal feudalism.

I asked my friend the Count what measures he adopted against any of his farmers who were not ready

with their rent when it became due. The question evidently surprised and puzzled him, for it was with considerable hesitation that he answered, "But such a thing never happens here."

I insisted, however, and asked, "What would you do if the case occurred?"

"Well," he replied, with great *naïveté*, "I suppose I should have to wait till my man got the money."

And he added that, in the event of a farmer being in want of cash from a bad harvest, illness, or any other cause, he "would advance any sum in reason out of his own pocket rather than suffer any man on his estate to go to the Jews in Revel."

This may be an exceptional case; and indeed I have heard of other noblemen in Esthonia, who, upon being applied to for relief by their former serfs, answer drily, "You know you are no longer my children."

The tie between master and man is broken, and the latter, being free to act, is bound to shift for himself. Yet so long as the bulk of the land remains in the same hands, sent down from father to son in the same families, and the labourer is tied to the soil, if no longer by law, at least by adhesive instincts, by ignorance, and a vague dread of the outer world, or by helpless poverty, as the same class still is in fertile Lombardy, the connection between capital and labour is not likely soon to undergo any very serious modification. The noble in the rural

districts, a lord of the land, and administrator of the law, will always be considered as a hereditary prince among his rustic subjects ; and as long as the German or Germanized race still monopolizes the higher branches of trade and industry in the cities, and has the louder voice in the municipal councils ; as long as the University of Dorpat, a thoroughly German institution, and by far the best of the seven High Schools in the Empire, presides over the education of the people in town and country,—Germanism will be supreme in these provinces, and hold its own against the Russian element which creeps in and settles in the suburbs as a snapper-up of those unconsidered trifles of lower business which yield moderate, but certain and steady gain.

The Esths, Lettes, and other native races which, since the abolition of serfdom, are rising in the scale of beings in the towns, receive their civilization, not from Russian, but from German sources. They assume German family names, speak German, affect German manners and habits of thought, attend German schools and colleges, frequent German Lutheran churches ; and although they are, here and there, inoculated with vague democratic notions hostile to social distinctions, large estates, and rights of primogeniture, they have been too long trained to reverence and fear the upper classes to dream of any change that should materially subvert social order ; and they too thoroughly despise and mis-

trust everything Russian to give in to any suggestions of that democracy tainted with Nihilism which seems to pervade the lower orders in other parts of the Empire.

This with respect to the cities. In the country, as I said, the landowner and his peasantry may be said to constitute a united and loving family.

My noble host told me that, on the suggestion of some itinerant agitators, his farmers had applied to him for "long leases and fixed rents."

"What longer leases can you ask for?" he had answered them. "Have not you and your families been with me and mine for many more generations than either of us can tell? Wait for such securities till you are threatened with eviction, and it will not be my fault if that day ever comes. And, as to fixed rents, I will gladly come to terms with you, if you will engage to insure fixed prices. I will assess the rents at the rate, not of so many roubles, but of so many bushels of rye per acre" (the rye being the staple produce of this land and climate). "We shall try to make out the average the acre has yielded these last ten years, and we will take that as the standard of rent from year to year. It will be for you to see to what extent you will be the gainers by the new bargain."

This seemed to send away the men satisfied that there was more sense as well as justice in their landlord

than in their friends the jobbing politicians, and they consented to "let well alone."

All I saw of the peasants of the estate as we went through the villages convinced me that the people entertain the highest opinion of the intelligence as well as of the character of the young Count, and that their attachment to him and to the family is as sincere as their deference and submissiveness.

It should be borne in mind that this young gentleman, like many of his aristocratic neighbours, is a highly-educated man, a great reader, acquainted with many countries, conversant with many languages, and well posted up with the political events and the scientific achievements of our age. The ordinary employment he finds in the management of his father's estate is not sufficient for his activity, and he has taken upon himself many of the duties which would otherwise devolve on the officials of the Imperial administration. Among others, he is chief clerk of the district's telegraph and telephone, having at his own expense put his residence into communication with the Government's line, and, from that as a centre, directing all the farming operations throughout the villages of his estate.

CHAPTER VI.

HELSINGFORS.

From Revel to Helsingfors—Russian Punctuality—Revel—Helsingfors—Finland—Her History—Her Constitution—Her Connection with the Russian Empire—Conditions of the Baltic Provinces—Travelling in Finland—The Inatra Falls—The Saima Lake—The Saima Canal—Forests in Finland and Russia.

ON taking leave of my friends, the hospitable lords of the model Esthonian estate, I travelled in the long summer afternoon by train to Revel, the capital of Esthonia, and hence, after a few days' sojourn, I went by steamer across the Finland Gulf to Helsingfors, the capital of Finland.

The good steam-boat *Nicholaia* was advertised to leave precisely at noon, weather permitting, and, as the day was heavenly, we took good care to be on board in due time. But twelve o'clock at noon struck, and one o'clock, and two, and the *Nicholaia* made no sign. At one p.m. some of the passengers, in obedience to the summons of the steward's bell, had gone below to lunch or dinner; but we, *i. e.* a young English fellow-

traveller and myself, had taken a late breakfast on shore, and, as the voyage was to be over in four hours, we had resolved on putting off our dinner or supper till we landed, in the certainty of finding better fare at the excellent hotel at Helsingfors.

But three, four, and five o'clock found us still moored fast to the Revel pier, and it was only on the stroke of the last-named hour that the captain made up his mind to give his orders for a start.

The unceremonious way in which a steam navigation company takes upon itself to waste their passengers' time caused us less surprise than we felt at the martyr's patience, or, one may say, stolid apathy, with which the passengers themselves put up with so outrageous an ill-treatment. The hour of departure was published in all the local newspapers; it was stuck up at the ticket-office door staring us in the face from the pier; the cargo was all on board, all was ready; yet we stood stock still; and when we, the two Englishmen, the only fidgety travellers on board, addressed some questions to the captain as to the causes of the delay, and as to when it would end, his answers were only "Presently," "Directly," till our importunity got the better of his temper, when, turning to me—he spoke English fluently—he sneeringly or defiantly advised me to seek the Englishman's usual and ever ready redress, saying, "Write to the *Times*," at which the

phelgmatic bystanders had a hearty laugh at our expense.

At last the "Presently" and "Directly" became "Now," and though we had lost five mortal hours, and only started at five, we had still more than two hours' daylight after we landed at Helsingfors.

We learnt afterwards that punctuality is by no means the rule with the steam-boats of that particular line, and that in our case the loss of time had been owing to some mysterious interference of the police. But the police in Russia, like the cat in an ill-regulated household, is made to bear the blame of other people's sins as well as its own.

Even with this drawback the short voyage on that fine afternoon was perfectly delightful.

Revel, a thriving place, with 40,000 inhabitants, is a queenly city as one enters it from the railway station; but it looks like a queen of cities as one leaves it from the sea: a stately place, with its *Dom* or *Domberg*, a huge, steep, rocky hill, crowned with towers and steeples, a sort of Kremlin, citadel, or upper town—once the winter residence of the noble Esthonian families, whose mansions are still standing—from the height of which the lower town slopes down in every direction to the plain and the sea, down narrow and crooked streets, past curious, high-roofed buildings with old gables and fantastic gargoyles and hanging

stories, past Gothic and Byzantine churches, past battlemented town walls and gates. It all looks like a remnant of old feudal Germany stirred into new life by the animation of bustling trade. It has the advantage of good clubs, and public gardens, and music-halls; but it has also the drawback of steep, narrow thoroughfares, with a clattering, bone-breaking pavement, and in its drainage there certainly is considerable room for improvement.

The Esthonian coast is not very lofty, but it makes a long sweep away from the town on either side, which imparts an air of grandeur to its position, and which you miss as you get across to the other side where Helsingfors hides itself behind its cluster of villa-studded islands. Along the channel opening through these islands, and past its bullying stronghold of Sweaborg, you come to land on the Finlandian capital, a perfect contrast to the Esthonian. Helsingfors is a grand, new town, with straight, wide, level streets, lofty churches, stately barracks, an imperial palace, a hotel nearly as grand and almost unique in its comforts of board and lodging, a university with 700 students, and a library with 150,000 volumes, with excellent sea-baths, and many other useful institutions, and with no other fault than being somewhat too roomy for its 32,000 people, too grand for its poor territory.

A strange sensation comes upon a stranger as he lands in Finland fresh from the Baltic provinces. He leaves Revel, where he fancies himself in Germany, and goes over to Helsingfors, a distance of four hours across the water, where he thinks himself at once transferred to Sweden.

Finland, as we all know, is not an integral part, but merely a dependency of Russia. It is a Grand Duchy, joined to the Empire by a bond of personal union, analogous to that existing between Sweden and Norway, and to that lately established between Austria and Hungary.

The Grand Duchy has not only laws and institutions, but also custom's duties, a coinage and currency, a finance, a flag, and a naval and military establishment of its own.

Finland, the country where the Finns, an Asiatic race, said to be akin to the Esths of Esthonia, the Magyars of Hungary, and other tribes, originally settled, spreading in early times over a vast extent of Northern Russia, previous to the Slavic immigration, became Swedish in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries; the vanquished so amalgamating with the conquerors as almost to become one people with them, being admitted to all their rights and liberties on the footing of political and social equality, and serfdom never having been in existence in the country within man's recollection.

There were wars for ages between Sweden and Russia about the possession of Finland ; the Swedes at times advancing their landmarks to the shores of Lake Ladoga, at Kexholm, and all over Ingria ; but in their turn losing ground, and falling back from Wiborg, from Fredrickshamm, and from river to river, till the whole province, with the Aland Isles, was definitively ceded to Russia at the peace of Fredrickshamm, in 1809.

The Russian Emperor was at that time Alexander I., a man open to generous impulses, and just then perplexed by the marvellous vicissitudes which were almost hourly changing the face of Europe ; and who, anxious to deal justly with his new subjects, not only promised to respect their free institutions, but even to extend them to the district of Wiborg, which had been wrested from Sweden and incorporated with Russia by Peter the Great, at the peace of Nystadt, in 1721, and where Russian law, with serfdom, had been introduced. Wiborg was now, 1809, re-united with Finland, and became a sharer of its liberties.

The area of Finland exceeds that of Great Britain and Ireland ; but its population is barely half that of London, for the country is thinly inhabited along the coast, and little better than a desert in the interior, and especially in Lapland.

Of the 2,000,000 souls in the Grand Duchy, about one-tenth are Swedes *pur sang*, and the rest have been

for centuries so blended with them, and so dependent on them for all matters connected with social advancement, as to constitute with them an almost homogeneous Scandinavian community. The official language till very lately was Swedish. Now Swedish and Finnish are equally admitted in all public acts, and share the press between them. Swedish is the language of civilization, especially in the towns; Finnish is the more common idiom of the rural districts.

The Russians of the other provinces look upon the liberal institutions enjoyed by Finland, by Esthonia, and the other German Baltic provinces with a mixture of pride and jealousy. They are flattered by the thought that their Government, despotic as it is elsewhere, should, at least in these regions, have been lavish of fair promises, and faithful in maintaining them; and they augur from these honourable precedents a possibility that a similar policy may at some future day be equally inaugurated for the general benefit.

On the other hand, the Finlanders complain that the compact under which they hoped to live has been repeatedly broken, and that their connection with the Empire, already fraught with much trouble and vexation in the past, may be the cause of still greater danger to them in the future.

They have, as we all know, a parliament, in which the four estates—the nobility, the clergy, the burghers,

and the peasants—are represented, and a senate charged with the executive power, and presided over by a governor, the only official appointed by the Emperor Grand Duke.

This we all know ; but we are not all aware that the parliament, after being once solemnly opened by Alexander I., remained in abeyance during the whole reign of that Czar and of his successor, being at last reopened, after the interval of half a century, in 1863, and even then with the clause that it should only meet every five years, and not without a convocation by the Emperor.

We are not all aware that Finland, as well as the German Baltic provinces, have been deprived of their exemption from military duty ; that the Esthonians, Livonians, &c., are incorporated with Russian regiments in obedience to the general law of conscription, and that the Finlanders are obliged to keep their army up to the same standard, though their forces have a separate organization, and are only bound to serve within the limits of their own territory and in defence of it.

The Russians, even the most liberal among them, grudge their Finnish neighbours their separate coinage, and their exemption from that depreciated paper currency which inundates the rest of the Empire. They find fault with that frontier line which divides the Grand Duchy from the adjoining provinces, and raises

a barrier against trade and free intercourse between fellow-subjects.

But the Finlanders answer that the obnoxious paper roubles had been equally forced upon them by the Imperial Government, in sheer violation of all right; and that it was only after the reopening of their parliament that, thanks to the good management of their Grand Ducal finances, they were enabled to re-establish their gold currency, and replace their own *marks* and *penni* in circulation.

They contend that their separate line of customs is their only safeguard against the Imperial commercial policy, which would promote the interests of the capital at the expense of the provinces; and they instance the obstacles raised against the exportation of cattle from the Baltic ports, a prohibition originally imposed in consequence of cattle diseases, but, in their opinion—erroneous, as I think—continued when that cause had ceased to exist, and only lest their trade should raise the price of wheat in St. Petersburg.

The Finlanders, in short, look upon the connection of their constitutional Grand Duchy with an autocratic Empire as something unnatural and monstrous. They assert that all concession, though it be but a re-vindication of right, had to be wrested from unwilling hands in times of distress and danger from the complication of foreign wars and internal disorders, when Russia's

difficulty became Finland's opportunity; that freedom conquered by such means and under such circumstances must needs be precarious, and that in all dealings with the strong and big the small and weak must always have the worst of the bargain.

There is, no doubt, something incompatible in the union as it at this moment exists. The Finlanders could not be satisfied with their condition even if it were now as it was under Swedish rule; for the constitution of Sweden, they reason, has made progress. Why should that of Finland have remained stationary? Why should it not also have been modified in a liberal, however moderate, sense? Why should there be, in Finland, regress?

A constitution without a free press is a mere mockery; yet every motion for such a freedom foundered in the Finnish chambers, possibly because a Conservative majority objected to it on principle, but more probably because it was felt that the Emperor Grand Duke would veto any measure of that sort as dangerous to the peace of the rest of the Empire, though, to remove that danger, a clause had been purposely inserted in the bill that nothing in Finland should appear in print in Russian, or in any other language than Swedish or Finnish.

The way out of the dilemma might be found in such a modification of the administration of the Empire as would place its institutions in something like harmony

with those of its Baltic dependencies. But it is questionable whether discontent on either side of the Gulf has not its roots less in any abuse of power on the part of the Imperial Government than in unconquerable national sympathies and antipathies. For the Finlanders are at heart Scandinavians; the Esthonians, Livonians, and Courlanders are Germans, and both resent any attempt, real or imaginary, to Russianize them.

The people at Revel complain that there are in their province two different offices of censorship of the press: that German papers or pamphlets are submitted to the police; but those published in Esthic, the native language of the lower classes, are laid before the clergy of the Orthodox or Russian Church, who show only too great a leniency to the attacks directed by those popular prints against the aristocracy and stirring up the emancipated serfs to agrarian outrages against the German landowners.

By her efforts to build up great staring temples, by her display of gorgeous ceremonies in cities where the immense majority of people are Protestants, the Russian Church is suspected of being merely a passive instrument in the hands of the Imperial Government, and making political propagandism under pretext of religious proselytism. The apprehensions of the people of the Gulf arise not so much from the conduct of the Government as

from the attitude of the National, Panslavistic, and other parties, of which the Nihilists are supposed to be the most desperate offshoot and the most formidable expression, and to harbour more implacable enmity to Esthonian conservatism and Finnish constitutionalism than to Russian despotism itself.

The Finlanders, the Esthonians, and their German brethren are loyal, law-abiding people. Not only need no revolutionary attempt be ever apprehended on their part, but their dissatisfaction is in the main mere uneasiness and sheer dread of revolutionary excesses in the adjoining Russian regions. The present unsettled conditions of the Empire have created unusual alarm among them, and I have heard good patriotic Finlanders congratulating themselves on having an army and navy of their own, as they foresee the case in which they may have to rely on that home force for protection against possible attacks of rampant Nihilism.

It is for the Imperial Government to allay such fears, and to remove such contingencies, lest its subjects on the Baltic shores should be reminded that, in the event of any wreck and disruption of the Empire, there might always be for them a safety anchor; that, if things came to the worst, their refuge, like that of the Cisleithan subjects of Austria, would be in the bosom of those German or Scandinavian nationalities from which they sprang, from which they were severed by more or less

violent political vicissitudes, but to which they are still bound by the ties of language and creed, of customs and institutions.

The Baltic provinces would, in such occurrence, look forward to annexation to the German Empire ; the Finlanders would aspire to form a Scandinavian confederacy, in which their Grand Duchy should join the kingdoms of Sweden, Norway, and Denmark under a compact of personal union, and subject to the same crown or dynasty.

But it is idle to speculate on such possibilities.

Material interests will always prove strong enough to counteract mere ethnical instincts, and, as we shall see, the trading interests between the Baltic provinces and the interior of the Empire are such that, if it may be said with truth that Russia depends for existence on the Baltic ports, it must also be allowed that these in their turn could not be sundered from Russia without losing their place and occupation in the world.

A house of course is in need of a door ; but, apart from the house, what would be the use of the door ?

It is not without regret that a traveller, after lingering for however short a time in these frontier provinces, can make up his mind to quit them for the interior of the Empire, as he can hardly expect to fare better by going further. The well-being, culture, and refinement which charm him at every step on this

maritime threshold are not likely, as he thinks, to follow him on his inland progress.

For my part I had but little time to give to these regions, and what little I had was so taken up by the friendly reception I met wherever I was introduced, that my movements in Finland, for instance, did not much extend beyond the walls of hospitable Helsingfors.

I could not, however, turn my back upon the Grand Duchy without taking a peep at the Imatra Fall, about which I had heard so much.

I travelled by rail in the night with a friend from Helsingfors to Simola, where I took post-horses to Wilmanstrand, on the great Saima Lake, where I hoped to find a steamer to take me alongshore to Harakka; but the steamer had left before our arrival, and we had to proceed by post to our destination by an excellent, well-macadamized road, amidst charming foreign scenery. We drove through Lauritsala, where we changed horses, and arrived towards noon at the Imatra Hotel.

We stared for hours at the wonders of the Imatra Rapids, the so-called Fall of the Vuoksa, a cataract, be it water-fall or water-slide, striking and awing by its grandeur even eyes who have seen Niagara; and that same afternoon we went up on foot to Harakka, near the spot where the Vuoksa issues from the Saima Lake above the Fall, and near which a club of St. Petersburg Englishmen have built a fishing lodge—a thorough

English home deserving a visit for its loveliness as well as for the truly sportsmanlike hospitality of the club members, some of whom take their turn to lodge there with their families for a good part of the summer season.

We tarried with them that evening and part of the following day, to see our hosts at their sport in the pool, where the fish swim in shoals, and seem as anxious to be caught as the fishers are to catch them; and on the morrow, in the afternoon, we drove back to the cataract and the hotel, and hence again posted across country to the nearest station on the Saima Canal, a magnificent hydraulic work, $54\frac{1}{2}$ versts in length, with 28 locks, through which the waters of the Saima Lake find an outlet into the Gulf of Finland at Wiborg.

It was Sunday afternoon, and we found the steamer, and the various stations, and the banks on both sides of the canal, crowded with gay excursionists, all in their Sunday finery, their best dress and happiest humour; most of them from Wiborg and the towns of that neighbourhood, but also with many strangers from St. Petersburg and other Russian districts, attracted to these parts by its renowned sea-bathing places; holiday people all determined to make the best of the precarious fair weather, and of their too short summer season. Little Russian was spoken on board the boat or at the stations; what was not Swedish or Finnish was more commonly English or German. But on the road, as we

posted to and from Imatra, we were almost driven to despair at the villages where we changed horses, the men at the post-houses knowing absolutely nothing but Finnish and a little Swedish. My English fellow-traveller, who justly prided himself on his thorough Russian scholarship, was here as utterly nonplussed as I was.

It was past eleven o'clock when we reached our journey's end at Wiborg; yet there was still twilight enough to see the town as it rose above the expanse of the waters, with its massive thirteenth century castle, a colossal and most picturesque object, looming dark and majestic in the deepening night air.

At midnight the St. Petersburg train took me back to Helsingfors.

Finland in the summer is a charming country, with a territory twelve per cent. of whose surface is lake and river, twenty more per cent. swamps and morass, the rest forest or thin pasture, or rye and potato fields, strewn all over with huge rocks or boulders of granite, cropping up everywhere, a hindrance equally to the work of the plough and scythe—a land of which any man may purchase a square mile for an old song and have it all to himself, and be as happy as the day is long, and as the Finlanders contrive to be, in spite of the dreariness of their wintry climate and the niggardliness of their stony soil.

The social conditions of this Grand Duchy differ materially from those of the Baltic provinces across the Gulf. In the German provinces the country still bears the aspect of a semi-feudal yet highly-educated community; in Finland the property is broken up, and for the most part in the hands of peasant proprietors, though there are no visible symptoms of agrarian or communistic combinations. The reason is perhaps that there is land enough, and more than enough, for everybody, though a vast deal of it may be required to enable a man to make the two ends meet.

The main wealth of the country lies in its forests, and the Finlanders, like the Russians, and like many other people, yet with greater reason than many other people, look upon the extent of their woods as immeasurable, and, as they too hastily conclude, inexhaustible; and the present generation, all intent on its own gain, takes little heed of the irreparable loss it entails on posterity.

In Russia, in the north and north-eastern provinces, a region of 150,000 square miles, 80 or more per cent. of the surface is forest. In Finland, a region where, as I said, so large a portion of the area is water, 54 per cent. of the actual land is forest; and its produce, 44,000,000 marks, or francs, represents more than one-half of the whole export trade of the country. Yet even here prudent economists, like Dr. K. E. F. Ignatius,

cry out against the senseless and wanton devastation which has been going on for centuries, and has become more ruthless than ever where roads, railroads, canals, and other channels have smoothed and sped the removal, and enhanced the price of timber and firewood.

"The Finland peasantry," Dr. Ignatius tells us, "seem urged by an inborn, savage, fiendish hatred of trees. Where iron cannot reach they resort to fire as the readiest means by which the ground may be cleared for their wretched tillage; and they pile up as fences the clumsiest palisades of wooden rails, worth far more than the stony bits of field or pasture they are meant to enclose."

The same or even worse is the case in the German Baltic provinces, in some parts of which forests are, or were till lately, used as manure for the soil; where trees and their branches are left to rot for five, six, or more years on the ground where they were felled, till they are turned by putrefaction into the best manuring stuff.

A German traveller, who visited those Baltic districts towards the middle of the present century, becomes almost poetical as he describes the "majestic primeval pines and firs, thick as the Alexander Column, and tall as the Admiralty tower in St. Petersburg, and as perfect specimens as one could find in the oldest nobleman's park." And he exalts the energy

by which the axe of Riga has been at work in those woods for centuries, rooting up the mighty trees for the navies of Holland and England ; “replanting them in the salt waves of the sea ; replacing their green boughs by variegated flags and streamers, their leaping squirrels by no less agile climbing sailors, and their long age of stationary repose by an equal period of incessant locomotion.”

The result of that activity was already evident at that epoch ; for, the same traveller tells us, where those coasts and the adjacent islands were all rich with thick forests, “the inhabitants have built so many boats, and warmed themselves for so many winters, that a few scattered oaks, birches, and bushes are all that remain.”

That boats must be built, and men must warm themselves, no one will deny ; but there is no reason why the destruction should be wholesale and indiscriminate, no reason why forests should not be replanted with as great an eagerness as they are cut down.

Of those two great boons with which Providence has blessed man, coal and wood, the quantity, however large, cannot be absolutely inexhaustible, and all the requirements of modern progress conspire to extend and hasten their consumption. For what concerns coal, when our stock is used up, we or our posterity however

remote, will have to do without it; but our wood we can ourselves make; we can prevent its unnecessary waste; we can rear up as much as we cut down; and we can cover with plantations all the bare spots of earth which cannot be turned to really profitable agricultural or pastoral purposes.

But the experience of many years, and long traveling over various lands of the Old and New World, satisfy me that of the forests which still existed in the early days of my youth—say, half a century ago—at least one-half has been swept from the earth's surface; while the new growth, for which we are indebted either to nature or man, barely makes up for the one-hundredth part of the damage.

The Germans, among whom yet linger some traditions of those habits of their ancestors about which Tacitus romanced, are still, perhaps, the only nation on the Continent who harbour some religious feelings for their forests, and pay some attention to their preservation and culture. These Finlanders and Russians do nothing towards protecting their forest trees from vermin, freeing them from creepers and parasites, guarding them against extreme heat and cold, preventing their crowding and stifling one another, and keeping up, in short, the difference that ought to exist between a civilized forest and a mere jungle.

Here in the north men leave their woods to take

care of themselves, and do not even keep off the peasants, who, as we learn from Mr. Mackenzie Wallace, in the winter, and under a heavy fall of snow, spread themselves about the forests and help themselves to whatever may serve to heat their stoves, the falling snow aiding them by obliterating their footsteps as well as the traces of their depredations.

Even the forests of the Imperial domains, which spread over a vast extent of territory in the north, are so little attended to, that in certain districts they do not yield to the Crown the average yearly income of half a kopek per acre.

The attention of the Russian Government and the press has lately been awakened to this important subject, and much is said and written about measures to be adopted to reform and enforce the forest laws, and to reconstitute the whole forestal department.

May something be done without loss of time, if anything is feasible! For in these matters it is everywhere not the legislator, but the executor, who is at fault; and may Russia not find out to her cost, as France, Italy, Spain, as well as North and South America, how idle it is to lock up the stable when the steed is stolen! By cutting, burning, or "girdling" the finest tree may be brought to the ground in half an hour. But in these climates, where vegetation lies torpid, and as if fettered with iron

bands, for six or seven months in the year, a pine takes at least 60 years in the best soil, and 90 to 100 years in poor ground, before it groweth into available timber; and in the northern parts of Finland, or in the corresponding latitude of Russia, between 60 and 70 degrees north, a tree must stand on its roots for 180 to 230 years before it is ripe for the saw.

At a moment in which the competition of the corn trade of the United States of North America is so ominously overshadowing the prospects of Russian husbandry, nothing ought to seem more important than any measure which should render less ruinous, and at the same time more profitable, that exportation of wood of all sorts which may for a long time be the largest source of income for Finland and for the other northern districts of this less than half inhabited or cultivated Empire.

CHAPTER VII.

MOSCOW—TRADE AND HUSBANDRY.

The Russian Baltic Ports—Russian Railways—The Channels of Russian Trade—Its Centre—Russian Industry—Industry and Agriculture—The Serfs—The Free Peasants—Town and Country—Labour and Capital—Russian Industrial and Agricultural Conditions and Prospects.

FROM Helsingfors to St. Petersburg the distance is 413 versts, or 275 English miles: the train travels over it in 13 hours.

The distance could have been made considerably shorter, and the railway might have better answered the wants and convenience of the population of Fredrickshamm, Lovisa, and other towns on the coast, had not the line, ostensibly for strategic purposes, been made to go all round inland through a desert to Hangö, avoiding Helsingfors, to which a special branch from Hyvinge had to be purposely constructed. Add to this that the Liteinoi railway bridge over the Neva in St. Petersburg is yet unbuilt, the terminus of the Finland line being still hid somewhere in an uninhabited suburb, behind

the arsenal ; so that a traveller cannot reach his hotel in the capital without crossing the broad river by boat.

But there are other reasons besides those urged by the authorities at the War Office to hinder the traffic both along this and all other railway lines along the Baltic coast.

These lines were laid out in obedience to a variety of conflicting local and personal interests, and with utter disregard of that "straight line" which the mathematical head of the Emperor Nicholas recommended as "the shortest between two given points," and which that Autocrat enforced wherever military considerations made it advisable. But commercial requirements have also a voice in such matters, and there is little doubt that crooked railway lines will gradually have to be straightened, and made subservient to the general interests in Russia as they have been in other countries.

The main object of the Imperial Government in planning or sanctioning their lines of communication was that of promoting the welfare of what was to be at the same time the trading as well as the ruling capital of the Empire. But there is no doubt that wherever may be the seat of Government, Moscow can no longer be deprived of the advantages of its admirable site. Washington will never rob New York of its world-wide importance, nor can the Hague at any time supersede Amsterdam. The Moskva, it is true, is for

all commercial, industrial, and even agricultural purposes a pitiful river, and all the conveniences of the admirable canal system which opens a water-way from north to south all across the Russian continent were contrived in favour of the city of Peter the Great, the czar who originally designed that canal system. But water communication comes to a stand-still in these northern latitudes for six months in the year, while the "iron horse" travels on his iron track, not only summer and winter, but also by day and night.

Even before railways threatened the revolution which they must actually accomplish, St. Petersburg was losing ground, and the efforts by which the Government strove to ward off the decline of its trade were of little avail against the natural forces that were rapidly aiding the development of its rivals.

Up to recent times, to protect the trade of St. Petersburg, everything was contrived to trammel the commerce of the Baltic provinces. While, for instance, whatever the Imperial tariff did not consider contraband could freely enter the Neva, there were many articles that were not allowed to be landed at Riga, others that could not be imported at Revel or Libau, and in some of the minor ports the import trade was limited by law to salt and herrings. In spite of all this, already half a century ago one-seventh of the whole trade of Russia was carried on by the ports of the Baltic provinces; that

of Riga alone being to that of the other ports of those provinces put together as nine to two.

The railways must further extend the provincial at the expense of the metropolitan trade ; for merchandise will find its way by land to St. Petersburg itself from the railway stations of Revel on the southern, or Hangö and Helsingfors on the northern coast of the Finland Gulf, in preference to being conveyed to Cronstadt, whence it has to be transferred in lighters to the wharves on the Neva.

To put off the evil day, if one listens to the complaints of these provincial localities, though the Government has consented to the enlargement and improvement of the port of Revel, it still objects to the surrender of certain grounds belonging to the Admiralty in that place ; grounds of no earthly use to the naval service, but which would answer the purpose of the Custom-house, at present deficient in warehouse accommodation, and hopeless of getting it anywhere else ; so that there is hardly an inch of ground where goods may be laid in bond at Revel. With respect to the hindrances thrown into the way of the Finland lines, enough has already been said at the beginning of this chapter.

But although these petty manœuvres may temporarily injure the Esthonian and Finnish ports, one cannot see how they may permanently help St. Petersburg, seeing that the best part of the trade must henceforth

go by land ; and St. Petersburg never was and never can be intended for a centre of the land trade.

Such a centre, for at least two-thirds of the available Russian territory, is Moscow, and this city is accessible by as many routes as Rome was in olden times proverbially said to be.

In the Baltic the railway from Revel to St. Petersburg, leaving the main line at the Gatchina junction, and crossing over to Torna, joins there the St. Petersburg and Moscow line, and is now, perhaps, the shortest way in existence from any point on the coast to Moscow.

From Riga there is a line through Dünaburg, Witebsk, and Smolensk to Moscow ; but the harbour of Riga labours under the disadvantages common to all river ports : it is too deeply embosomed in its gulf, too far inland, and too shallow at the river's mouth ; and it may, it is supposed, at no distant day be aided, or superseded, by Windau, a good spot on a prominent point out at sea, to which the Dünaburg and Riga line could easily be prolonged.

Further south, on the Courland coast, is Libau, already a trading-place of some consequence, and, either through Wilna, Minsk, and Smolensk, or through Dünaburg, Witebsk, and Smolensk, in communication with Moscow.

But through the same line of Wilna and Minsk, Libau could, besides, carry on the trade of those southern

provinces of Kief, Poltava, Kursk, Charkoff, &c., that zone of the "Black Earth" which constitutes the granary of Russia, and the main points of which are now reached by the northern railway; but there Libau might expect to meet the competition, or rather the concurrence, of the ports of the Black Sea, and of the railways coming up from Odessa, from Sebastopol, and from Vladikavkas.

For the present Libau has suffered the German ports, and especially Königsberg, to be beforehand with it. As we shall see, large cargoes of wheat find now their way from Kief and Charkoff to England *viâ* Königsberg, the greater railway expense being counterbalanced by the much shorter sea voyage.

By a rectification of the railway lines the distance from Riga or Libau to Moscow could be made nearly as short as that between St. Petersburg and Moscow.

For the furtherance of works of that nature money is, of course, required, and the Government's answer upon any draught on the Imperial treasury is sure invariably to be "No Effects."

Yet, when I was about to leave England, at the end of June, a telegram from St. Petersburg appeared in the English papers, announcing that the new Minister of the Interior, Count Ignatieff, had "proposed a reduction of 150,000,000 roubles in the war expenditure of the Russian Empire." The news was, of course, "too good to be true." Whatever cheese-parings Russia may

contemplate in her military or naval budget, she is not likely to give the world the satisfaction of placing her forces on a peace footing, taking the initiative in that measure of general disarmament which would bring so great a relief to all Europe, and which she could best afford to do, as she has no neighbour that might ever dream of attacking her, and she is not now, and will not be for a score of years, in a condition to venture on any aggressive enterprises on a large scale.

But, independently of the state of her finances, in the furtherance of works of real public utility, such as the extension and improvement of her railway "net," Russia well knows that she always could, in normal times, rely on the support of foreign capital; for it must be remembered that the Russian Government has, even in its most straitened circumstances, so honourably met its liabilities, so faithfully paid the dividends of its stock even to shareholders of the States with which it was at war, and has so practically shown that in its estimation "Honesty is the best policy," that its credit stands deservedly high on all the European exchanges.

On the other hand, were even Russia reduced to her own resources, she has lately achieved such success in every branch of industrial enterprise, that money to any amount, for really profitable undertakings, ought easily to be found among native business men most

immediately interested in their own as well as in the public welfare.*

Moscow and the other central provinces are the real workshops of Russia; and they were, it is said, designated for that purpose by Peter the Great, to whose initiation Russia seems to be indebted for everything, and who, foreseeing the losses the old capital might incur from the temporary or permanent removal of the seat of Government, wished to indemnify it by making it the centre of Russian trading enterprise.

Similar views, as we all know, were entertained by Count Cavour with respect to his native Turin, when, just before his death, in 1861, he foresaw the necessity of proclaiming Rome the head of the Italian kingdom.

The industrial prosperity of this region, as well as of the whole Russian Empire, arose, at first, and depends

* The activity of all industrial enterprise in these central districts of the Russian Empire is far more considerable than such sources of information as I had hitherto access to had led me to imagine.

Moscow and its immediate environs reckon as many as 930 manufacturing establishments, employing 91,279 persons, and producing 105,357,751 roubles worth of goods. In the whole province of Moscow the manufactories are 2516; the hands at work, 188,853; the value of the produce in roubles, 167,460,499.

The trade of St. Petersburg amounted in 1875 to 521 manufactories and 41,164 operatives, with an income of 83,000,000 roubles. But that trade did not extend very far beyond the town districts; a considerable portion of it depended, as before stated, on Imperial patronage, and consisted of those articles of home manufacture which were in former times the pets of all European courts, and it is now rapidly declining.

still, on the protection insured to it by the Imperial tariffs. And there is no doubt that the main bulk of goods exported from these Moscovite works looks for customers almost exclusively to those half-civilized districts of South-Eastern Europe, of Asia Minor, and Central Asia over which Russia's sway has been and is almost daily stretching out. Whether a policy which favours the producers at the expense of the consumers is conducive to the real well-being of any State is a point which amongst Russians no longer comes under discussion. They merely point to the immediate result for an answer; but they ought, I think, to look a little beyond that.

The great object of the Imperial Government in its adherence to a strictly protective policy is to promote such work as may yield the promptest returns, irrespectively of any detriment that other work of a more tardy development may suffer.

Manufactures in this country are killing agriculture.

Common providence, it seems to me, ought to suggest the expediency of first drawing from the soil all the profit that the most consummate husbandry can elicit, and only thinking of other handicrafts when it becomes necessary to eke out the public revenue to keep pace with the development of artificial wants and luxuries; for land is, after all, the only sure and inalienable heritage of a nation, and agriculture the occupation which best

insures a human race from the evils of enervation and degeneracy.

But in Russia civilization has been a premature and forced process from the beginning; it has not gone through the natural phases which have marked its progress in other countries. Rottenness, it can never be too often repeated, has here preceded maturity. The towns are few and far between, their inhabitants vastly outnumbered by the rural population;* there is hardly any middle class in the cities, none whatever out of them; and many of the great landowners, especially since the emancipation of the serfs, are absentees. There is no country life as we understand it in England; only rustic life as in the old Roman world. Here, as in Rome, agriculture, marked with the brand of servitude, had ceased to be held in sufficient honour, and cannot easily be restored to it.

The Russian peasant, with a drop of Tartar blood in his veins, is by nature a nomad. He had been tied to

* "The rural population at the time of the emancipation of the serfs was reckoned at 60,000,000. Of these 23,000,000 were State peasants, 23,000,000 belonged to private landowners, and 3,000,000 to appanages and other departments; altogether 49,000,000 were serfs.

"The towns in Russia proper were only 127. Only twenty-five of them contained more than 25,000 inhabitants; only eleven more than 50,000; only four more than 100,000 inhabitants. St. Petersburg and Moscow both exceeded 600,000 inhabitants.

"Of the peasantry, 1,250,000 live in the towns."—Mackenzie Wallace, 'Russia,' pp. 146, 167, 473. Eighth Edition.

the soil by the Czar Boris Godunoff in 1601; he has been manumitted, and in a great measure made lord of the soil, by the Emperor Alexander II. in 1881. But he does not, for all that, take kindly to the soil. You hear him everywhere complaining of his own field, and hoping to better himself by shifting his quarters, no matter how far, no matter where.

The Russians seem to be in too great a hurry to condemn a vast part of their territory as absolutely and irreclaimably barren. There is no doubt that *Tundras* (ice and sand in the extreme north, where the ground a few inches beneath the surface never thaws) and forests in the centre, and *steppes* and swamps in the south, spread far and wide over a large part of the Empire. But it is not certain that clearance, drainage, and manure have at any time done justice to the land, or, indeed, that anything in that respect has ever been at all attempted. The Russian peasant would not make a bad husbandman; he would work gladly and bravely enough if anybody would make it worth his while. He is now his own master, and master of the land he cultivates. But all land in the world, and especially Russian land, requires more than merely stout and willing arms: it requires intelligence and capital, and these the Russian peasant neither has himself nor can look for among the class of the more than half-ruined landowners, his former masters.

There is no capital to give the Russian soil a chance ; for the money that could be applied to it is in a great measure in the hands of aliens, who look upon Russian land as neither a safe nor a promptly remunerative investment. And there is no labour, because field-work is abandoned to a peasantry who, even when nominally chained to the soil, contrived, with the permission of their masters, to migrate to the cities, where almost any manual or menial labour enabled them, not only to pay the *obrok*, or tribute, to their owners, but also to earn a competence—nay, sometimes a fortune—for themselves.

“The Russian merchants or shopkeepers in Riga,” says a traveller, who visited this country before emancipation was dreamt of, “are principally serfs grown rich by their extraordinary industry. There is more than one millionaire among them who entered Riga as a young man with no other capital than his hands, ears, eyes, and a good stock of natural intelligence.” And he proceeds to state that, although they lived as princes, and possessed ample fortunes, they still held themselves ready to be summoned away from their elegant palaces, and bound to toil as day labourers on their lords’ estates. But these latter, although they refused to manumit their bondmen on any terms, “lest they should set a bad example,” or more likely lest they should kill the goose that laid the golden eggs, found it for their advantage to allow the serf to pursue his profitable occupation, and

said to him, "Go where you will and earn what you can, but remain one of my people, and send me your annual tribute." The tribute, of course, always rose in proportion to the man's earnings.

Nothing has, as yet, been materially changed in the condition of these men.

The *obrok*, duty, tax, or tribute which the serfs paid to the lord, or the State, or the Church which owned them, to obtain leave of absence and exemption from their work, the free peasants still owe to the village community to which they belong. By the terms of the Emancipation Act of 1861 the former serfs are now gathered together in knots of families, constituting a rural commune, possessing land in common, which they distribute among themselves on the principle of local self-government. But to these lands they are still tethered ; they must cultivate them ; and in return each of them must contribute his own share of the ransom money to be paid, for four-fifths to the State, and for the remaining fifth to the former landlord, till the extinction of the debt which they contracted when they obtained possession of the land.

The tribute they formerly paid to their lords is now exacted by the commune, and by it handed over to those to whom it is due. But the same liberal permission a serf easily obtained from his master to throw up his spade and resort to the towns for what he deemed a

less laborious or more lucrative employment, is with equal facility granted by the commune, and on the same condition—that its temporarily liberated member should always be liable to be recalled, and that he should indemnify the commune for the loss of his labour by the payment of his tribute.

The consequences are a rapid depopulation of the rural districts, a great affluence of men to the workshops and factories of the towns, and the formation of a numerous *proletariat* in their lowest purlieus.

There is land for every man in Russia, only too much land ; but land without labour is worthless in any country—in Russia more than in any country, because, as we have seen, the soil and climate demand a very great expenditure of capital to make it productive. As careful and intelligent cultivation seems to be out of the question, the Russian boor makes what he can out of his land by the most improvident and slovenly farming. He simply scratches the earth to the depth of a few inches, never fences or manures his field, leaves it fallow for one year out of three, allows the weeds to outgrow and choke it, and then curses the land that starves him and his cattle ; and, whenever he can break loose, he turns his back on his commune, and goes to earn his own bread and the tribute he owes where he can get a fair day's wages for a fair day's work.

The prospects of agriculture in Russia, especially in

these northern parts, are thus by no means bright ; and if no land actually falls out of cultivation, at least there is not much fresh soil brought under tillage, as there might and should be, for we have here the very contrary of what is elsewhere called land hunger. When a rural commune proceeds to the allotment of the communal land—a process usually occurring every three years—it often happens that the families, instead of striving to obtain each of them as large a lot as they can, often seek every pretext to reduce the share that falls to them to the smallest dimensions ; and that for the good reason that land is of little account, and can with difficulty be made to yield the tribute with which it is charged, so that its usufruct only involves the certainty of labour without the certainty of profit. Owing to the absence of many of the villagers on leave, the labour of which the commune can dispose becomes often so scarce, and, as left in great part to women, so inefficient, that at harvest or sowing time it becomes necessary to recall its absent members, not without great detriment to the employment they are pursuing in the towns.

A race, as it were, of amphibious beings has sprung up having both a town and country life ; they are land labourers in their own homes generally in the summer months, and spinners or weavers in the town mills, away from their wives and children, in the winter season.

How matters may be settled when the debt of the

rural population shall be fully redeemed, and the tiller of the soil shall become its free and permanent owner, we must leave it for time to decide. But in the mean while this strange blending of town and country life, this frequent and permanent dispersion of the family, this tendency of the rural population to invade the industrial centres, cannot fail to lead to the deterioration and pauperization of the whole race.

The Boyars or great nobles and other landowners, I repeat, who in Russia at all times felt little attachment to the isolated life of their estates, have in many instances turned away from them in disgust, and a vast deal of the land is for sale ; but Russia, at least Northern Russia, is not the country into which either new purchasers or new labourers may be enticed by any fair words of even the most active emigration agent. Between the nobles who owned the land and the serfs who cultivated it there was, as I said, no middle rank, and none seems to be springing up ; for the merchants, teachers, and other professional men, and even skilled artisans, are generally foreigners, and long to go back to their own country with such wealth as they have accumulated, or they stick to their nationality from generation to generation, as the only safeguard against the exactions and ill-treatment of a venal and corrupt administration.

I have also said that of the native population more

than four-fifths belonged to the peasant class ; that the towns were few, mostly mere overgrown villages, at enormous distances from one another. All these unfavourable circumstances give no sign of present material amelioration. Hopes are entertained that matters may mend, and that a rural middle class may arise by the time that the emancipated serfs shall become real peasant proprietors, free from all tribute, and bound by no inconvenient trammels to the commune. But a peasant proprietor, if he becomes rich, will have to employ labourers ; and if his children, as the law requires, are to have an equal share in his inheritance, they are not unlikely at the third or fourth generation to sink back to the condition of mere labourers also.

The fluctuations and vicissitudes of wealth and poverty obey the unalterable laws of nature. The better class of peasant proprietors, a kind of rural aristocracy, will take the place of their former landlords, and will be dependent on the labour, not of serfs attached to the glebe, but of slaves kept to it by sheer want ; and these latter will have no other chance of bettering their condition than by migrating to the cities, and exchanging the husbandman's spade for the weaver's shuttle.

And the Russian is by instinct a vagrant, and he has a whole wide world within the limits of his own country to which to betake himself.

CHAPTER VIII.

MOSCOW—AUTOCRACY AND NIHILISM.

The Russians judged by themselves—Upper Classes and Lower Orders—The People and the Government—Autocracy and Regicide—Attitude of the People—The Police in Moscow—The Policy of a Terrorized Government—A New Sovereign and his Ministers—General Melikoff and Count Ignatieff—A Square Peg in a Round Hole—A Masterly Inaction.

FEW men would presume to foretell how the intricate problems concerning labour and capital, landowners and tenants, labourers and peasant proprietors, will eventually be set at rest. Russia, as we all know to our cost, is not the only country where such questions await their solution. In Russia difficulties were considerably aggravated by the long-prevailing evil of serfdom, and by the improvident manner in which a remedy has been sought to cure it. But all the degradation and prostration of their servile condition had not so utterly crushed the soul and body of the Russian people as to make them unfit elements for the construction of a new social order.

The main point to be settled in this work of re-organization is how to correct the vagrant disposition of the Russian lower classes. "First, catch your peasant." The Russian Mujik is not quite the lazy, besotted, incorrigible brute he has been often described. As I have before stated, he is laborious enough if any one will make it worth his while to work. He is docile if any one will take the trouble to teach him. Give him work by the piece, and he will be at it from morning twilight to evening dusk; but allow him daily wages, and he will work just as much as you may make him, and no more.

But for many years in the course of the eighteenth and in the early part of the present century it was the fashion at Court, and in the upper circles, to depreciate both the country and the people—everything national; proclaiming the excellence of anything that came from abroad. The Frenchified dandies of the days of Catherine II., of Paul, and of Alexander I. seemed to find no words sufficiently strong to express their contempt for whatever was Russian.

"Home manufactures—utterly worthless! Russian working-men—a lazy, indolent set! Orthodox divines—shallow hypocrites! Russian public functionaries—the most arrant rogues in the world!"

Such was the picture the people here were wont to draw of themselves. It seemed, in a travelled and

semi-civilized Russian's estimation, that what was not altogether barbaric and brutal in his country must be altogether depraved and corrupt; and other nations, as is usual and natural, could not fail to take the Russians at their own valuation.

Opinion has veered round very decidedly of late years in this respect, and the same Russian who was absurdly severe and despondent in his judgment of himself and his countrymen, has now run into the opposite extremes of over-weening self-confidence and conceit.

One hears people here thanking their stars that their peasantry have been kept in thralldom for centuries, and contending that serfdom, which was, after all, a Russian institution, and had nothing in common with feudal villeinage or negro slavery, was the best school to qualify them for the life of free men.

"Serfdom," they argue, "prevented the formation of a *proletariat*, and kept the streets clear of the beggar rabble who are so great an eyesore in many towns of the Continent. That peasantry which, when enslaved, relied on the landowner's bounty in distress, in sickness, and old age, will now themselves be landowners, and free Russians will never again be thrown for existence on a master or a stranger's charity."

And yet these very optimists who protest now, in words, so high an opinion of their people, forgetting

how formerly they looked upon them as the scum of the earth, are not always consistent in their practical treatment of those lower orders with whom they may chance to be brought into contact. In no country are men in humble condition more harshly dealt with and scorned by those who deem themselves their superiors; nowhere is ill-treatment more passively, more willingly submitted to as a matter of course by those who acknowledge themselves inferiors.

In a hotel, in a restaurant, in every place of public resort, it would seem that no service, no favour, could be obtained from a Russian waiter, street-porter, or boot-black without "blowing him up" like a thief or a dog. Even in the best shops you should never deal with a Russian tradesman with the same civility as you would with one of his French or German *confrères*.

"*Sluishi, tui!*" (Hark thee) says a Russian nobleman to a Russian tailor (everybody who is not a nobleman or a foreigner is *thou'd* in Russia, even the wealthy merchant). "*Padi sudi*" (Come here). "Measure me for a coat, velvet collar, bright buttons, long in the waist—do'st understand? Let it be ready the day after to-morrow—do'st hear?" "*Slushi*" (I hear and obey). "*Stupai*" (Be off then).

But again: "My dear Mr. Meyer," the same nobleman will say to an *Innostranez* (foreigner), "excuse me that I have given you the trouble to call here—pray be

seated. I want a new coat; would you advise green or blue? Pray make it in the newest fashion, and, if possible, I should like to have it in a fortnight. I know how much you have to do. If it can't be helped, I will wait three weeks. I am much obliged to you. And how go affairs with you, Gospodin Meyer? How do you get on with Prince R——? If I can be of any service to you in that quarter, let me know. If possible, you will let me have the coat before the three weeks, will you not? Adieu!"

These were the scenes that were acted at St. Petersburg or here in Moscow half a century ago. The few lines are quoted from the old German traveller often referred to.* But there is little or nothing altered in these matters in our days.

Now, as then, "a foreign workman is paid what he asks without hesitation, even if he charges sixty roubles for the mere cutting of a coat. But with the Russian mechanic it is: 'What! twenty roubles for such a trifle as that? Twenty strokes with a cudgel from the police! There is ten for thee, and quite enough! Take it!' 'Slushu' (I obey), answers the poor overborne rogue, makes a bow, and goes away quite content."

The same old traveller tells us how he learnt to manage Russian postilions. His innate politeness

* 'Russia,' by J. G. Kohl, London, Chapman and Hall, 1844, pp. 68, 349.

induced him to address one of them as "My good man," and beg him to "be so kind as to get on a little faster."

But the fellow only stared at him, and went on jogging at his own pace ; when a Russian friend, who sat by the German's side, broke out in a thundering voice—

"You brute! you scoundrel! If you don't drive faster—this minute—I'll have you flogged like a dog by the police at the next station ; I will tear your soul from your body."

This had immediately the desired effect, for such was the only language that a Russian serf could understand : he had found his master.

Matters, I repeat, and as I can witness, have not much mended in this respect since the emancipation ; for I have often, myself, been out in a droski, both here and at St. Petersburg, with friends who were better acquainted with the nature of an *Isvoshtchik* than I could pretend to be. My friends, when they wished the driver to mend his pace, wasted no breath in abusive words, but simply administered a sharp dig in the man's ribs as he sat half-drowsy in his coach-box, close to our knees—a sharp dig which might have taken the breath out of any other man's body, but which had only the effect of waking up him and his horse to a sense of their duty ; and it very unfrequently happened that the gentle admonition had to be repeated.

Were so impressive a mode of address to be tried with a London cabman, one would like to know how long it would be before he jumped down from his seat, took off his coat, and tucked up his shirt-sleeves, bidding his monitor to "come on."

And yet this same *Ivoshtchik*, who so tamely submits to such indignities as the mere perquisites of his calling, will resist all attempts of autocracy to set a tariff on his charges, and you will have to bargain with him beforehand for the amount of his fare, and call to your aid a score of his fellow whips to outbid him, unless you wish to expose yourself to his extortions, against which there is no redress.

One owes the fellow this justice, however, that with him a bargain is a bargain, and I believe there is no instance of one of his class departing from the terms he had agreed upon.

This depreciation of everything Russian by the Russians themselves, and the general moral debasement which was its necessary consequence, must in a great measure be laid to the charge of the Government,—a Government which allowed one man to look upon himself as everything, and to count all the rest of mankind as nothing.

"Know, madam," said the Emperor Paul to a foreign lady, who pointed to one of the courtiers magnificently attired, and asked "who was that distinguished

personage ?"—“ Know that there is no one distinguished in Russia except the one to whom I speak, and only so long as I speak to him.”

These high-flown words have been in later times attributed to the Emperor Nicholas—perhaps guilty of plagiarism—and were reported by the authoress of ‘Letters from the Baltic,’ who perhaps misunderstood what was said, as spoken by that Emperor to herself. The words may, therefore, after all, rest on no positive historical foundation ; but they would in any case have been cleverly invented, as they convey the very spirit, and sum up all the good and evil, of autocratic rule.

Peter the Great conceived that there were in his Empire no elements on which a civilized society could be based. He imported a ready-made civilization from abroad, and imposed it on a reluctant people by the mere strength of his absolute will, and upon his sole responsibility. His successors found that the system worked well, and could never be induced to believe that it had worked long enough. But what the founder had laid out, intending it, perhaps, to be merely provisional and preparatory, became permanent, and sank so deeply into the ground that some people thought, and some still think, that any attempt to remove it must needs be attended by the disruption of the Empire.

Such is, however, the problem that presents itself for solution ; whether autocracy in Russia has served its

time, or can be moulded to serve the present time ; in other words, whether it must be said of it, as was said of the order of the Jesuits, "*Sit ut est, aut non sit.*"

The contest now lies between Imperialism and Nihilism, and this latter has only too lately "scored one."

The horror of what Nihilism has done, and the terror of what it may yet do, has not yet altogether subsided. People talk little about it, it is true, but perhaps they think of it all the more.

I came to Moscow on Sunday morning, the last of July, when the town was all gay with the flags hung out in honour of the new Emperor's visit. The Emperor had travelled from St. Petersburg on the Friday night ; on Saturday few persons in the capital knew that he had left ; hardly any one could say where he had gone. In like fashion he disappeared from Moscow on Sunday night. His departure was known on Monday, but not his destination, Yaroslav, which we only learnt from the official *Gazette* the day after. His whereabouts and his movements have ever since been arranged on the same hide-and-seek tactics. His Majesty comes in unannounced, and goes away without warning. Pressing orders are sent out to the Crimea to have the palace ready for the arrival of the court at Livadia ; telegrams come to Kief to the railway station-master to air the state apartments, as the Emperor will take that route on

his progress to Warsaw. These are all police dodges. It is felt as a necessity that the sovereign should show himself. The strategy consists in sending the Nihilists who seek the Emperor where he is not, and never allowing them to find him where he is.

It little matters whether it is the Emperor who fears for himself, or the Empress who fears for him, or the ministers who fear for both, and for themselves besides. It is a Government that shows fears; an Imperialism ruled by terror, and only capable of ruling by terror.

Whether the Government has good reasons for its abject apprehensions, no one can tell. No one knows anything about Nihilism; and George Augustus Sala never was more pungently sarcastic than when he stood on the side walk of the Nevski Prospect, at St. Petersburg, and asked the passers-by to "be so good as to show him a Nihilist."

Who are the Nihilists, and what is Nihilism? By their deeds we shall know them. They have repeatedly attempted political assassination, and they have in one flagrant instance achieved it. They are regicides, but they seem to have nothing in common with other king-slayers. Individuals have again and again attempted and taken a sovereign's life. But either they had some personal outrage to avenge, or were ranting fanatics like Booth, or pitiful scoundrels like Guiteau, courting even ignominy for the sake of notoriety.

Sovereigns' lives have often also been sought by a knot of conspirators; but their deeds, whether successful or not, have usually begun and ended with them. The Nihilists are the first who undertake to perpetuate assassination.

The Nihilists seem to have no definite aim. One sees the point they start from, but not the ultimate scope to which they are tending. They have murdered a man who had done more good than harm; they are threatening a man who has as yet done neither. Clearly it is a principle, a system, the Nihilists are combating; but they have not apparently any other principle or system to substitute for it.

They are waging war against autocracy; they will allow no autocrat to live. Such being their object, the first question arising is, What means do they dispose of to compass it? The next, What do they propose to do when they attain it?

How many are the Nihilists? What class of persons do they belong to? What power for mischief is in their hands? If you ask the Government, or read its press, or interpret its acts, you must conclude that the number of Nihilists is legion, that they are ubiquitous, that their strength is boundless.

On the Sunday of my arrival at Moscow, the express train I travelled by had scarcely reached the station when the train was invaded, not by porters

On a sudden the woman stood still and stamped her foot on the ground.

“I am tired, and will walk no further; I must have a droski.”

A droski was summoned; the woman took her seat. But now it was the driver's turn to raise objections:

“Who is to pay me?”

The policemen looked to the woman; the woman shook her head. She was made to alight and hobble on as she could.

“Hang it!” said I to my friend, taking out my porte-monnaie, and making one step forward; “the woman shall have her drive if a few kopeks can help her.”

But my friend laid his hand on my arm.

“Are you mad? They will take you up for a Nihilist.”

I refer to these incidents, trifling as they are, because I had seen nothing like such conduct on the part of the police before, and saw nothing like it afterwards. It was only the presence of the Emperor in Moscow during those twenty-four hours that had brought about an exceptional state of things. The police were demoralized and dreamt of nothing but Nihilists.

There were otherwise no symptoms of apprehended disturbance or even of discontent in either capital, or anywhere in Russia. Merchants and brokers complained

as usual that business was slack, and the common people discussed the prospects of the coming harvest. An immense commotion was indeed created by the tidings of the assassination of President Garfield. The Washington tragedy seemed to startle the minds of men to whom the murder of their own Emperor had been a matter of indifference, and from whose memory the event, now but three months old, seemed almost obliterated. For it is in the nature of a gagged population, afraid of having an opinion on home matters, to show an extremely and even absurdly lively interest in foreign affairs. Whatever might be the disposition of mind of the Russian people, they allowed but little to be made out by outward sight. They might be sorry for the dead Emperor; they might be anxious for the living one. But, after all, politics were no affairs of their own. There was war declared between the Government and the Nihilists. It behoved peaceful citizens not to meddle; it was only the police's business.

Peaceful citizens knew nothing about the Nihilists; they wished to know nothing. They would not befriend assassins; they execrated them. But, "after all," they reasoned, "things were not as they should be, and the Nihilists might bring about a change. The means by which these assassins would compass their end were abominable, but might not the end itself be justifiable?"

It was only the Government that harboured fears, only the police that refused to be reassured. Autocracy had to settle accounts with Nihilism. Could nothing be done to disarm, to conciliate, or else to annihilate Nihilism ?

That has been the Government's task ever since the new Emperor's accession. General Loris Melikoff suggested an abandonment of the old system, and recommended representative government. The Emperor dismissed Melikoff and called in Count Ignatieff. Ignatieff thought a constitution *à la Melikoff* for Russia would have just such results as a constitution *à la Midhat* had for Turkey. He would have none of it.

Matters were in this position when, on the day after my arrival at St. Petersburg, I called on Count Ignatieff.

I had seen a good deal of him at Constantinople, for we were both early risers, and he kindly admitted me as his first visitor. He was equally friendly in the reception he now vouchsafed me, and liberal in his offers of all the assistance he could give me in the furtherance of my object. He sent me some of his trustiest officials in the Home Department, and gave me letters to the governors of the provinces I intended visiting, bidding me "tell the truth freely and fearlessly, without favour, but also, if possible, without prejudice."

Ignatieff is not quite an idol in Russia, and he is certainly the best abused man in Europe, and especially in Turkey and England.

But I well remember the time when Prince Bismarck was equally a *bête noire* at home and abroad, and with respect to him there have been, as we all know, endless conflict and fluctuation of opinion.

Ignatieff was, till lately, only known as a diplomatist, and in that capacity he has been branded as the "Father of lies," possibly because he knew that nothing is so apt to deceive as truth when spoken to those who are stupidly determined to disbelieve it. He has had to bear the blame of the Turkish war of 1877, the earliest disasters of which were attributed to incorrect information he sent home about the utter disorganization and demoralization of the Turkish army. It would not be difficult fully to acquit him of every charge on that score, and to prove that during his stay in Constantinople he has served his own country with a faithfulness and ability that could never be too liberally rewarded. But to prove my assertion, I should have to go over the whole phases of the late Eastern difficulty, and that would be extraneous to my present subject.

Suffice it to state, that at the close of the war it was boldly proclaimed that Ignatieff was in disgrace, and his career irrevocably at an end. But I ventured

to disagree with this forecast, and predicted, on the contrary, that "many months would not pass ere Ignatieff would be at the head of the Government at St. Petersburg."

But my prophecy was only partially verified. My expectation was that Count Ignatieff should come into office as a successor of Prince Gortschakoff, and that he should be trusted with the management of the Foreign Department. I am convinced that, had he been sent to the Berlin Congress of 1878, either as first or as second Russian Plenipotentiary, the great German Chancellor might have found his match, and would not have had things altogether his own way; the negotiation would not have turned out so favourable to the interests of Austria, and England herself might have come off with better terms than those Bismarck persuaded or compelled Lord Beaconsfield to accept.

But Count Ignatieff was now no longer an ambassador, and was not yet, perhaps never will be, Foreign Minister. He had now to prove himself, not a diplomatist, but a statesman, and that required, perhaps, talents of a different stamp from those that distinguish him; and he had soon to perceive how much more difficult it is to rule men than to cajole them.

Though he was only Minister of the Interior he had to bear the whole burden of the Government; for the police, post and telegraph, public worship, and other

departments which had been taken from the Home Office under Melikoff, were again joined to it on Ignatieff's appointment.

There is now that in Russia which never existed before—a Minister and a Ministry; for up to this day every Secretary of State was simply a private clerk of the Emperor for his own special department; the Ministers never met in council, knew nothing of one another; each of them transacted business with the Emperor alone, and was solely responsible to him.

But now there was a Minister, and virtually a Cabinet; for all the tangle of affairs in the Empire at the present crisis concerned the home policy, and that was wholly in Ignatieff's hands. It was not without much pressure, he told me, that he could be induced to take office, and he had consented only on condition that he should have *carte blanche*.

Count Ignatieff was now responsible for everything; and the question was, "responsible to whom?" The power has been for months in his hands; how did he use it?

He began by appointing various Commissions to grapple with questions which it was for the Minister himself to solve; and whatever may be thought of such a vicarious way of doing one's work in Russia, in other countries such a course is suspected of an intention of wasting time and doing nothing; it is looked upon as a

mere shirking of duty, unworthy of a statesman with any pretension to initiative, settled convictions, clear views, and a resolute will.

Ignatieff's next move was to vex the press, both native and foreign, to suspend temporarily or suppress finally some of the most respectable and quite moderate Russian journals, and to blacken the columns or pages of French, English, and other inoffensive newspapers ; * a clumsy policy even if it were efficient, but which never answers any purpose ; for the censor, even if he knows how to read, has such a mass of papers before him that he gives it up in despair and reads nothing, but gives his sentence at hap-hazard, often straining at a gnat and swallowing a camel.

The beginning was not auspicious ; but it was then, perhaps, too early to decide to what extent the Government deserved praise or blame. To know how fit Ignatieff was for his post one should know something of the country he had to deal with. There was, as I said, little political stir, no perceptible dissatisfaction, and only vague aspirations. People hoped for a change, but

* This latter is the fate that befell the letter in which these harmless strictures were written, when they appeared in print under another form. The *Times* was sent to its subscribers throughout Russia with six black columns ; but as the police have no right to interfere with the letters or parcels of foreign diplomatic or consular agents, the "poison" had a chance to come in and spread and do all the mischief of which it was capable, all the same.

no one inquired when, where, and how it might come to pass. Many even of those who wished for innovation thought that it should come from on high; that it should not attempt too much or go too far; above all things that it should not touch that autocracy which, in their opinion, was the palladium of the Empire, the only guarantee of unity, order, and security. Ignatieff was aware of all the difficulties of the situation, and he sought his safety in a negative policy. As there was so much to do, and he knew not where to begin, he made up his mind to do nothing. He sneered at a constitution *à la Midhat*; at a constitution *à la Melikoff*. People naturally looked forward to a constitution *à la Ignatieff*. But he went on naming committees, and crushing one after the other the hydra-heads of the press, a score of which budded forth for every one that was disposed of.

The fall of the Minister was often predicted; announced as irrevocably resolved upon and imminent. But Ignatieff is still in office; his Government is still rampant autocracy; disturbed, though not tempered, by a pusillanimous dread of the Nihilists.*

* February, 1882. Latest accounts (see *Standard*, Feb. 13) describe Nihilism as dispersed and overpowered. Let us hope the statements are correct.

CHAPTER IX.

NIJNI.

Fairs and Exhibitions—A Russian Fair—Nijni Novgorod—The Town—The Fair—Position and Character of the Place—Sights at the Fair—The Governor—The Pick-pockets—The Tartars—Tea—Land and Sea-faring Tea—Russian and English Tea—Asiatic Trinkets—Siberian Iron—Siberia—Russian and English Penal Colonies—Nijni after the Fair—A Catastrophe.

FROM the last Old World Fair which I saw in Frankfort in 1849, to the first Universal Exhibition at which I was present in London in 1851, there was barely the lapse of two years. Yet at the earlier of the two dates I had somewhat rashly come to the conclusion that the age of yearly markets was gone by: at the latter epoch I began to think that the era of such annual gatherings was only commencing.

The Old World Fairs seemed to me to have arisen from the necessities of an imperfect civilization. They were not wanted in England or Northern France, because such great capitals as London or Paris supplied ample scope for the requirements of centralized trade:

but they were needed in divided countries like Germany or Italy, where frontier lines almost at every step hindered the circulation of merchants and merchandise, and where there were no permanent emporiums of national or international commerce.

Consequently, the *Handelmesse*, or fairs of Leipsic and Frankfort, the *Fiere* of Bergamo, Reggio in Emilia, Sinigallia and Messina, as well as that of Beaucaire in Provence (which was for a long time a political, but not an ethnical appendage of France), and the one at Pesth in Hungary (which had nothing in common with Austria except the person of the Sovereign) survived the stormy period of the all-levelling, all-effacing French Revolutions, and were still matter of considerable interest in my early days and in those of my few surviving contemporaries.

But the discontinuance of the festivities and indulgences with which the Mediæval Church had originally hallowed these trading assemblages, and the abolition of the free transit and exemption from duties with which the benevolent or enlightened policy of despotic states had privileged them, reduced the fairs to little better than objects of curiosity and scenes of amusement; and, especially after the construction of long railway lines, the world had ceased to depend upon them for its business.

It was the consideration of all these historical facts

that induced me to travel a thousand miles to see the Old World Fair, which still keeps its ground at Nijni Novgorod.

Nijni Novgorod, or Lower New-town, is older than Moscow, and only not so old as Novgorod the Great, which was a contemporary of Venice, and was still new when the semi-fabulous Ruric and his Warangians are supposed to have given their name to Russia.

Nijni Novgorod, which everybody here calls simply "Nijni," dates from 1222; and mention of its fair occurs, we are told, in 1366, since which epoch its celebration has suffered very rare and only violent interruption.

To understand why this venerable spot should have been for so many years, and should be still, so extensively favoured by the world's trade, it is hardly necessary to see it. We only need bear in mind that Nijni lies near the confluence of the Oka and the Volga, two of the greatest rivers of this Russia which alone of all countries of Europe may be said to have great rivers; the Volga having a course of 2320 miles, and the Oka, a mere tributary, of 850 miles.

It is the position which the Saône and the Rhone have made for Lyons; the position for which St. Louis is indebted to the Mississippi and Missouri; the position which Corrientes will soon owe to the Parana and the Paraguay.

Nijni lies at the very centre of that water communication which joins the Caspian and the Black Sea to the White Sea and the Baltic, and which, were it always summer, might almost have enabled Russia to dispense with roads and railroads.

But Nijni is, besides, the terminus of the railway from Moscow. That line places this town and its fair in communication with all the lines of Russia and the Western World, while the Volga, with its tributary, the Kama, leads to Perm, and the Pass of the Ural Mountains, and the vast regions of Siberia and Central Asia.

Nijni Novgorod is thus one of the most important links between the two great continents, the point of contact between Asiatic wealth and European industry; and its fair the best meeting-place for the interchange of commodities between the nations that still walk, ride, or row at the rate of three to five miles an hour, and those who fly on the wings of steam at the rate of thirty to fifty.

The site of Nijni is somewhat like what I still remember of St. Louis after a seventeen years' interval. We travelled from Moscow over a distance of 273 miles in thirteen hours. For the last hour or two before we reached our journey's end, we had on our right the river Oka and a hilly ridge rising all along it and forming its southern bank.

On alighting at the station we drove through a flat, marshy ground, intersected by broad canals, to a

triangular space between the Oka and the Volga at their confluence, where the fair is held.

We went through the maze of bazaars and market buildings, of rows of booths, shops and stalls, eating and drinking sheds, warehouses and counting-houses. We struggled through long lines of heavy-laden country carts, and swarms of clattering droskies, all striving to force their way along with that hurry-skurry that adds to confusion and lessens speed ; and we came at last to a long pontoon-bridge, over which we crossed the Oka, and beyond which rises the hill-range or ravine, on the top and at the foot of which is built the straggling town of Nijni Novgorod.

Nijni Novgorod is a town of 45,000 inhabitants, and, like most Russian towns, it occupies a space which could accommodate half a million of people. Like many old Russian towns, also, it is laid out on the pattern of Moscow, as far as its situation allowed ; and, to keep up the resemblance, it boasts a Kremlin of its own, a grim, struggling citadel with battlemented walls and mediæval towers over its gates, with its scores of Byzantine churches, most of them with their five cupolas *de rigueur*, clustering together like a bunch of radishes—one big radish between four little radishes—but not as liberally covered with gilding as those which glisten on the top of sacred buildings in St. Petersburg or Moscow ; down the slopes and ravines are woods and gardens, with coffee-

houses and eating-houses, and other places of popular entertainment.

It is a town to be admired on the outside and at a distance as a picture, but most objectionable as a residence on account of its marvellous distances and murderous pavement, a stroll on which reminds you of the martyrdom of those holy pilgrims who, to give glory to God, walked with dry peas in their shoes.

The pavements are bad in Nijni town, but worse in Nijni fair; for if in the former all is hard, sharp, uneven flint, in the latter, what is not wood is mud, and what is not mud is dust, for heavy showers alternate with stifling heat; and, after a three hours' drought one would say that these good people, who live half in and half out of a swamp, and who drink anything rather than water, can never spare a poor drop to slake the pulverized clay of their much trodden thoroughfares.

With all these drawbacks, however, and even with the addition of its villanous smells, this is an interesting and striking spot. No place can boast of a more sublime view than one can get here from the Imperial Palace and Terrace, or from the church-domes or spires on the Kremlin; or, even better, from the Esplanade of Mouravieff's Folly—a tower erected by the well-known General of that name on the highest and foremost ravine, and on the summit of which he had planned to place a fac-simile of the famous Strassburg clock, but constructed

on so gigantic a scale that hours and minutes, the moon's phases, the planets' cycles and all besides, should be distinctly visible from every locality of the town and fair for miles and miles around.

From any of those vantage-grounds on the hill look down. The town is at your feet; the fair—a city, a Babylon of shops—stretches beyond the bridge; the plain, a boundless ocean of green, field and forest, dotted here and there with church-spires and factory-shafts at prodigious distances; and the two broad rivers, bearing the tribute of remote regions from north and south in numberless boats and lighters, and neat gallant steamers; the two streams meeting here at right angles just below the pontoon-bridge where an immense five-domed church of recent construction has been reared to mark and hallow the spot.

Down at the fair, in the centre of its hubbub, rises the governor's summer-palace. The governor dwells there with his family during the few weeks of the fair (mid-August to mid-September), coming down hither from the Imperial Palace in the town Kremlin, and occupying the upper floor. The whole basement, the entrance-hall, and all passages—with the exception of a narrow, private, winding staircase—are invaded by the crowd and converted into a bazaar, the noisiest in the fair, where there is incessant life and movement, and music and hurly-burly at every hour between noon and

night—a lively scene upon which his Excellency and his guests and friends look down from the balcony after their five o'clock dinner, smoking their cigarettes, and watching the policemen as they pounce like trained hawks on the unwary pick-pockets prowling among the crowd.

The governor, a courteous, fine-mannered gentleman, an officer of high rank and fortune, is a son of a converted Israelite, enriched and ennobled by trade, and who in his later days entered public life and rose to the rank of a "general"—for all officials in Russia wear uniforms, and are given the same titles as they rise through the various stages of a Government department whether it be of the civil or military service.

The governor, I say, a man of small, but elegant stature, with well-chiselled, regular features, more characteristic of the Caucasus than of Mount Lebanon, was, like other educated Russians, a fluent talker and a polyglot.

He told us of the trouble he had with these light-fingered gentry, who come hither with passports and high characters from village priests or town mayors, which they purchase from the peasants with whom they fall in by the wayside; come in like wolves in sheep's clothes, undistinguishable among the flock, and ply their trade with such success that one of the brotherhood was caught the other day with as many

as fourteen porte-monnaies—alas! all empty—in his pockets.

The governor added that he objected to being plagued with outside rogues, having a good lot of his own to attend to, for hanging is out of fashion in Russia,—flogging is, at least nominally, abolished; and these wretches would not be worth the salt they would consume on their way if transported to Siberia; so that the only measure he could take with alien miscreants, caught *in flagrante delicto*, was to send them back to the place they came from to be dealt with by his colleagues as these might think fit.

The sight of any crowd, provided one does not come into contact with it, but simply looks down upon it from a safe place, as on Lucretius's *mare magnum*, must have some interest for the dullest beholder; and here especially the variety of face and garb and the Babel of tongues cannot fail to bewilder, even if it does not delight, the eye, and to rivet, even if it does not charm, the ear.

The open space before the governor's palace, and the raised causeway, planted with rows of trees common to all Russian towns, and called "Boulevards," are one mass of thronged sellers and purchasers, both of them, but especially the dealers, remarkable above all things for dirt and rags; for many of the people have no other home in Nijni than their shops or booths or the steps

before them; many share the stalls with their horses; and even in the best hotels in the fair, in some of which the charges are exorbitant, ill befalls the traveller, whether he follows the advice urged by the guide-books and brings "his own towels, his sheets and pillows" with him, or whether he does not—for he cannot bring what he can often not otherwise get—water.

After one night's trial of the fair hotels, we betook ourselves to the town, where the accommodation, if one can get it at all, is somewhat less atrocious.

The brunt of the Nijni fair only begins on the 18th (6th old style) of August. The almanacks of the year 1875 reckon that the average number of traders meeting here every season lies between 150,000 and 200,000; and that the money which exchanges hands between them in their commercial transactions amounts to something like £16,000,000.

But this does not represent the actual number of strangers who assemble here from the beginning to the end of the fair, or even of those who crowd the place on any day on which the movement is at its height.

Not unlikely, also, the yearly improvement in the means of communication since those particulars were given, has tended considerably to increase the yearly concourse.

All I can state positively is that the governor

assured me he had good reason to look forward to the arrival of 500,000—half a million of visitors before the affair was over. And General Count Ignatieff, who was governor here for two years on his return from his mission at Constantinople, and previous to his appointment as Home Minister and *factotum* to the Emperor, told me he had to abolish the passports in Nijni, as it would have been impossible for any staff of clerks even to open, let alone examine, register, and *viser* the 40,000 documents of that nature which come to the police for inspection in a single day.

The Count might well have added that he wished all the Russian Empire were now as Nijni was under his auspices; for the Count, to do him justice, is a Liberal *pour son compte*, and wise enough to proclaim that “the passport system was only contrived to protect and befriend *les flous* ;” yet the system is maintained, and has lately been strengthened, throughout the Empire, and even in Nijni Novgorod, to enable the Government to deal with those most formidable of all *flous*—the Nihilists.

Of this immense mass of strangers now in Nijni, the town itself, and especially the upper town, sees and hears but little.

The fair has its own ground, on its own side of the bridge, its own hotels and lodging-houses, its own churches, chapels, theatres, eating, gambling, and other

houses, its long straight streets and boulevards, and pleasure as well as business resorts.

It has its fine Chinese Row, though Chinamen have lately discontinued their attendance ; it has rich traders' temporary homes, fitted up with comfort, and even taste and luxury ; and it has its charity dormitory, a vast wooden shed, built by Count Ignatieff, and bearing his name, intended to accommodate 250 houseless vagrants, but alas ! in a place where there must be 20,000, if not 200,000, persons answering that description.

Of women coming to this market the number is comparatively small—one, I should say, for every 100 men ; of ladies not one in 10,000, or 100,000.

Of those who muster sufficiently strong at the evening promenade on the Boulevard, indigenous or resident, for the most part, rather the look than the number is formidable ; and it is here in Nijni, as it is generally in Russia, that a Mussulman becomes convinced of the wisdom of his Arabian prophet, who invented the yashmak as man's best protection, and hallowed it : for of the charms of most Russian women, blessed are those who believe without seeing !

In working hours only men and beasts are to be seen—a jumble and scramble of men and beasts : cart-loads of goods ; piles of hogsheads, barrels, bales, boxes, and bundles, merchandise of all kinds, of every shape, colour, or smell, all lying in a mass topsy-turvy,

higgledy-piggledy ; the thoroughfares blocked up, the foot-paths encumbered ; chaos and noise all-pervading ; and yet, by degrees, almost imperceptibly, you will see everything going its way, finding its own place ; for every branch of trade has, or was at least intended to have, here its appointed abode ; and there are Tea Rows ; Silversmith and Calico Streets ; Fur Lanes ; Soap, Candle, and Caviare Alleys ; Photograph, Holy Images, and Priestly Vestments Bazaars ; Boot, Slop, Tag and Rag Marts and Depositories—all in their compartments, kin with kin, and like with like ; and everything is made to clear out of the way, and all is smoothed down ; all subsides into order and rule, and not very late at night—quiet.

The Tartars do the most of the work.

They are the descendants of the old warriors of Genghis Khan and Timour the Lame, of the ruthless savages who for 200 years overran all Russia, spreading death and desolation wherever their coursers' hoofs trod, making slaves of the people, and tributary vassals of their Princes ; but, who by their short-sighted policy favoured the rise of that dynasty of Moscow Grand Princes, who presently became strong enough to extend their sway both over Russ and Tartar.

And now, behold ! The descendants of those same Tartar savages, by a strange Nemesis, and reversal of fortune, are here, compelled by hunger and poverty to

come up from Kasan, and from the steppes of the lower Volga, and to make themselves generally useful as hewers of wood and drawers of water; as men-of-all-work to those very Christians, whom their forefathers flattered themselves they had thoroughly broken and for ever ground to dust.

The Tartars, only half reclaimed from their roaming and plundering habits, driven further and further from the regions where they could feed their flocks, hemmed in on all sides by the military colonies of Cossacks quartered on their ever-receding frontiers,—the Tartars, or many of them at least, have, in a great measure, acknowledged themselves vanquished; they have recognized the superior skill, the aggregate energy, the steady progress, the manifest destiny of that civilization which they had so long combated and despised: they bow to it; they sue for admission into it, for participation in its advantages, and they are content, at the outset, to fill its lowest ranks, to perform its meanest duties, to put up with its scantiest rewards.

Debarred from the leisure and freedom of his wandering pastoral life, and not easily reconciled to the sameness and tameness of the drudgery which was offered to him in the agricultural settlements, the Tartar, like the Chinese, shows a decided preference for town over country life, for industry over husbandry, and for the hardest toil in mines, roads, and railroads

over the (to him) duller employment in field and garden.

Here in Nijni the Tartars are chiefly at work as lighter-men, street-porters, and warehousemen; they do not, however, disdain domestic service, and in that capacity they are remarkable both for intelligence and docility. Most of them are in rags, and apparently plunged in wretched poverty. The food which supports them, and the roof which shelters them at night, are in a great measure a problem that nobody cares to solve. For, it is true, in Russia, if it be anywhere else, that "one half of mankind know not and seek not to know how the other half live."

How the better half do live here is no mystery.

The great merchants of Moscow and St. Petersburg or their representatives and partners come here for a few days, partners and clerks taking up the task by turns, according as business allows them absence from their chief establishments.

They bring here no goods, but merely samples of goods — tea, cotton, woollen and linen tissues, silk, cutlery, jewelry, and generally all articles of European (home Russian) manufacture.

They have most of them good apartments in the upper floors of their warehouses; they see their customers, mostly provincial retail dealers; they show their samples, drive their bargains, receive orders,

attend on 'Change (for they have a *Bourse* at the fair, near the bridge), smoke indoors (for in the streets that indulgence is forbidden all over the fair for fear of fire), lunch or dine together often by mutual invitation.

They are gentlemanly men, young men for the most part (for their elders are at home minding the main business), young Russians or Russified Germans, some of whom adopt and even affect and exaggerate Russian feeling and habits; young men to whom it seems to be a principle that easy-made money should be readily spent; leisurely, business young men, who sit up late and get up later, take the world and its work and pleasure at their ease; understand little and care even less about politics; profess to be neither great readers nor great thinkers; but are, as a rule, free-handed, hospitable, sociable, most amiable, and anything rather than unintelligent men.

Accustomed to friendly intercourse and genial hospitality in their fathers' homes, these youngsters live in a handsome and rather reckless style at the hotels and restaurants of the fair, prolonging their suppers and bidding the corks of champagne-bottles to fly; their revels being justified by a necessity of propitiating, by treating, their customers, and of showing some of the interior of Russian life to those strangers whose letters of introduction they delight to honour.

Other amusements of a less harmless and more excit-

ing nature the place does not afford: for the theatre and its ballet, the circus and the rope-dancers, are second-rate, and the gipsy and singing or dancing girls whom the *jeunesse dorée* do patronize, scarecrows every body of them, are not *le jeu qui vaut la chandelle*.

Moreover, these pleasant young men, though living in Russia, have German blood in their veins; and Teutonic blood, to do it justice, never, or let us say seldom, sinks to those depths of degrading and revolting debauchery into which the Celt and the Slav are often ready to plunge.

Of all the articles of trade which come to court public favour in Nijni, the most important and valuable is tea; and although the Moscow merchants, by the excellence of their sea-faring tea, chiefly imported from Odessa, or through England, have almost entirely driven from the market the caravan tea, still about one-tenth of the enormous quantity of tea sold here is grown in the north of China, and comes overland from Kiakhta, the city on the border between the Asiatic-Russian and the Celestial Empire.

I was curious to compare the taste of some of the very best qualities of both kinds, and was brought to the conclusion, confirmed by the opinion of gentlemen interested in the sale of sea-faring tea, that, although some of their own is more high-flavoured and stronger, there is in the Kiakhta tea an exquisite delicacy, which

will always receive in its favour a higher price. The difference, I am told, mainly arises from the fact that the caravan tea, exposed to the air during its twelve months' journey in loose and clumsy and much-shaken paper and sheep-skin bundles, gets rid of the tannin and other gross substances, a process of purification which cannot be effected in the necessarily sealed and hermetically-closed boxes in which it reaches Europe by the sea-route; so that if sea-faring tea, like port-wine, easily recommends itself to the taste and nerves of a strong, hard-working man, a dainty, refined lady will give preference to a cup of Kiakhta tea, as she would to a glass of Chateau Yquem.

But whether coming by sea or land, there is no doubt that the tea one drinks in Russia, everywhere, among high or low, can be had nowhere else, England herself not excepted.

The Russians, who take tea at all hours, and in all places, and may be said to live by tea, are quite sure that we in England have nothing half as good to drink as theirs; and it is our own fault, they think, because we "know not how to make it, and we boil it." You may reason with them from morning to night, and you will not shake their conviction that England is the country where "time is money," where "they eat underdone and bleeding meat," and "boil tea." In their opinion, to boil is to spoil.

The interest of a European, however, would be chiefly attracted by what is less familiar in his own part of the world; and, short of an actual journey to the remote regions of Siberia and Central Asia, nothing is calculated to give him a more extensive idea of the produce of those Trans-Uralian Russian possessions than a survey of the goods they send here for sale.

What astonishes a stranger at first sight is quantity. You may walk for hours along yards and sheds, the repositories of iron from Siberia. You pass hundreds of shops of malachite and lapis-lazuli, and a variety of gold and silver work and precious stones from the Caucasus, cut with all the minute diligence of Asiatic skill. You will see Turkish carpets, Persian silks, and above all things the famous Orenburg shawls, so finely knitted, and with such patience that one can (they say, but I have not made the experiment) be made to pass through a lady's ring, though they be so broad on all sides as to wrap the lady all round from head to foot.

One may, besides, have his choice of hundreds and thousands of those delightful curiosities and knick-knacks, recommendable less for their quaintness than for the certainty one feels that there is no possible use in the world they may be put to.

To make any purchase at Nijni one should know how to buy, and yet be careful where and of whom you buy.

The art of "higgling" is cultivated in the east and south of Europe with as much zeal and love as that of painting ever was in old Italy. You must not be frightened by very high prices, neither must you be tempted by prices seemingly very low. You can have whatever you like at just the right price, if you know the price of things and use a little fence; but you may think you have done wonders of cleverness in buying a large and splendid opal for 100 roubles—an opal which you value at least at 500—to find out, only too late, as an English friend of mine knew to his cost, that the trinket would be dear at ten copeks, for the "opal" was a mere common pebble.

Though not yet in Asia, a traveller feels that he is here at Nijni on the threshold of the "Asian mystery," and must prepare for a good deal of mystification. But he may also rid himself of many of his misconceptions, and learn to see with his own eyes many things at which he had hitherto only looked through other people's spectacles.

Nothing can be more astonishing than the change that has been wrought in Russian minds with respect to that ominous name of Siberia.

That region which imagination had invested with all the horrors and terrors of a place of expiation and torture, turns out now, in sober reality, to be an Eldorado. Not only is there no limit to its mineral

wealth ; but large tracts of its soil, in spite of the climate, give evidence of a prodigious fertility, and offer a wide field for the energies of colonizing enterprise.

The ill-treatment of transported convicts, the Russians contend, is an affair of the past. Indeed, they affect to look upon it as a myth, a bugbear, the gloomy reports of which vanish upon the application of impartial critical inquiry.

But, whatever may have been the fate of common criminals or of political offenders in the worst times, the condition of a prisoner in Siberia at the present day, the Russians say, is by no means a very hard one, if he will only work, and without even over-exerting himself. For he will be not only well fed, and lodged, and cared for, but even free to change his abode, to pursue the occupation he prefers, to earn money and make his fortune, while he improves his morals, and rehabilitates his character.

So great, indeed, and so enviable, the well-being of prisoners and exiles in Siberia appears to be, that crowds of voluntary emigrants follow in their tracks ; whole districts of the old penitentiary establishments are now settled as the abode of honest men, and felons are daily sent further and farther east or north beyond the limits of Siberian civilization.

These are Russian assertions, and the picture is,

no doubt, rather *couleur de rose*; but recent travellers who have visited those prisons, and cannot be suspected of a desire to please the Russians at the expense of truth, seem in a considerable measure to confirm the pleasing tale; and they go far to prove that the Russian Government has found out that there are better uses to which even the worst of criminals may be put to, than the far simpler and less costly, but now unpopular, expedient of hanging them.

Siberia and Central Asia are to Russia what Australia and Van Diemen's land were for many years, to England; with this difference, however, that the English penal colonies were at enormous distances beyond sea; Russia's Asiatic possessions are an integrant part of her territory, and can be occupied and turned to the purposes of civilization step by step, and stage by stage, trade following on the settler's path, and railway annihilating distance. England is a kingdom with a hundred distant colonies; Russia is a compact Empire of a hundred contiguous kingdoms.

But to return to our Nijni Fair:

Had I not travelled beyond St. Petersburg and Moscow, I should never have been able to dream of the extent of Russia's work, and of the corresponding Russia's wealth. I could never have believed that she could produce so much for sale, or that she had money for such extensive purchases. The Empire is a world

in itself, and is perhaps somewhat too apt to take pride on its sufficing for itself, and wanting next to nothing from its neighbours.

Moscow is to have a Great Exhibition this next spring (1882), probably coinciding with the solemn ceremony of the Emperor's coronation, and adding to its lustre and interest. But it must be a "National" not an "International" show. The people should not know how much protection has done, is doing, or will do for them. Russia invites no comparison, challenges no competition. Foreign goods may be better or cheaper, but a Russian should only consume Russian goods. Russian manufacturers are sure of the custom of at least 90,000,000 of Russians. It is a tolerably extensive monopoly. Hardly a sample of anything of what this country is able to produce comes to Nijni fair from foreign countries. Unconscionably heavy duties forbid: and on this subject, so far as I can see, manufacturers and merchants, whether natives or aliens, and peoples of all classes are of one mind with their protectionist Government; all equally and exclusively patriotic. All stand up for protective, or indeed prohibitive, duties.

Much of the cutlery one sees on the tables of hotels and restaurants at the capital or in provincial towns is of home manufacture; some from Tula, some from Pavlovo, but chiefly from Warsaw; and much of the

earthenware, china, and glass equally proceed from Imperial or national manufactories. It is, as a rule, inferior ware, and in bad taste; and the knives are evidently made "to sell," whether they cut or not. The principle is, "Keep your money in your own country; stick to home articles, however infinitely better and cheaper may be the goods that you could get from the foreigners. Do not make yourself dependent on the foreigner for your supplies."

High-spirited and enterprising hotel-keepers, however, manage to get their ware from abroad,—knives from Sheffield, glass from Bohemia, &c. Whether they put up with heavy sacrifices to pay the high duties, or simply compound with the customs' officers to evade the duties, or, in plain words, to smuggle in what they want, I am not bound to reveal.

Even as it is, what is called the Russian industry must not be supposed to be a spontaneous national production. There is no cotton, flax, or silk mill that does not owe its original foundation and that is not in a great measure under the management of an alien, usually of a German, a Frenchman, or a Briton. No railway has been laid, no mine opened, no establishment for the construction of agricultural implements or railway rolling stock erected without the intervention of foreign intelligence, foreign capital; above all things, foreign administrative talent. A Russian patriot-poet

has frankly said: "We have never done anything; not even made a mouse-trap."

And not only are the Russians, generally speaking, deficient in their power of initiative, but they also lack that steadiness and energy, those strict methodic habits, which are as necessary to the continuation as to the commencement of an industrial enterprise.

They will often fret and bear a grudge to the strangers that come into this country to make their fortune at its people's expense; as if the success of an industry established in any country, no matter by whom, were not conducive to public as well as to private well-being. They will fret and bear ill-will to the foreign speculator till they make the country too hot for him and drive him back to his own home, selling his mill or his mine for whatever he can get. But if the mill, or the mine, at however cheap a bargain, comes into Russian hands, in twenty to one cases it ceases to be an orderly, a thriving, or paying concern.

This dog-in-the-manger antipathy, grounded on envy of "the foreigner," is not peculiar to Russia; but there is no country where the instinct is so strong, where it is so recent a re-action against a too-long prevailing contrary feeling, where it is less justified by the natives' capacity, earnestness, or even good and true self-confidence, to manage their own affairs.

The Russians should be sure of their ability to

supersede the strangers before they show too much eagerness to "turn them out." But, all the same, out the strangers must go.

One has only to come to Nijni to be satisfied about the enormous wealth Russia can command by the mere production of raw materials.

During the fair of last year (1880) 7,453,163 poods of iron (62 poods to an English ton) were brought in for sale. This year (1881) 6,000,000 poods are here already, and not only will the quantity of last year be soon and vastly exceeded, but, whereas last year 887,000 poods were not sold, this year all will be eagerly bought up. For the success of the Nijni fair depends on the condition of the harvest throughout the Empire. And while 1880 was a year of famine the crops of this season (1881) have been most promising, and the provincial trader as well as the peasantry have money enough to afford the journey hither, and to make their purchases, for which, as they well know, payment in cash is the rule.

Though every shop is open, and some of the merchandise is hung up for inspection on the stalls at the bazaars, the Old World fair differs in many respects from a modern Exhibition; and it has more importance for buyers and sellers than for chance travellers interested in the progress of art and industry in their various branches.

There is no novelty at Nijni ; no new shape, pattern, or colour just coming out to catch popular favour ; no unknown mechanical contrivance ; no discovery likely to affect human progress and brought here for the entertainment of the intelligent, un-commercial visitor. There are only the shopkeeper and his customer, though it is a wholesale shop and on a very large scale.

The fair, moreover, has not the duration that is generally allowed for an Exhibition.

Though officially opened on the 27th of July, the fair does not begin in good earnest till the 18th of August ; and it reaches its height on the 27th, when accounts are settled, and payments ensue ; after which, goods are removed, and the grounds cleared ; only a portion of the business lingering throughout September.

About half a score of days, out of the two months during which the fair is held, are all that may have attraction for the generality of strangers. And although many come from all parts of Russia, and from foreign countries, I do not think any tarry here for pleasure beyond two or three days.

It would be interesting to anticipate what change a few weeks will effect in this scene which is now so full of life, bustle, and gaiety ; this stage, where so great a variety of human beings from nearly all regions of the world, with their money or money's worth, with their

hopes and fears, their greed and extravagance, all their good and evil instincts and faculties at play.

In a few weeks the flags will be furled, the tents struck ; the pontoon-bridge removed ; the shops closed ; hotels, bazaars, and churches, all private and public edifices, utterly deserted and silent ; every house stripped of the last stick of valuable furniture ; every door locked, barred, and sealed ; the place left to take care of itself.

For autumn rains and spring thaws must set in, when the seven or eight square miles of the ground of the fair, as well as the country to an immense extent, will be under water.

If you come to Nijni in the dark season, and look down from the hilly ridge where the town stands, you will fancy that the Almighty forgot this part of the world when He was busy on the third day of creation, and never fixed here the limits between land and water ; for the great rivers which have here their meeting-place are allowed to range and ravage the place at their pleasure, and the boundless level, which I have described as an ocean of green, but which even in the driest summer is cut up by channels and dotted with pools, and ponds, and lakelets, becomes in winter a compact watery or icy surface, spreading as far as mortal ken can stretch : and the ground of the fair, the city of shops, is turned into a shabby kind of uninhabited Venice,

with canals instead of streets, and its forsaken, and empty, and half-drowned houses only approachable by boats.

The people of Nijni Novgorod, as we learn from the guide-book, used to have other fairs beside the one which the world still attends. One of them was held on the ice in January, at the mouth of the Oka, till seventeen years ago, when the ice gave way, and "the booths and temporary inns that had no other foundation sank, and a considerable number of men, women, children, and horses miserably perished by drowning."

That winter fair seems to have since been discontinued, and everything about the fair itself, and the disaster to which it gave rise, has by this time been so utterly forgotten, that I could not find the faintest tradition of the event even in the recollection of the "oldest inhabitant."

CHAPTER X.

THE OKA.

Rivers and River Steam-boats—Russian Rivers—The Oka—From Nijni to Vyksa—Aspect of the Country—Sights along the Banks—Mourom—Vyksa and the Vyksa Works—A Russian Estate and an English Joint-Stock Company—A broken-down Lordly Establishment—A Palace, a Village, and a Nunnery.

I HAVE been travelling on the Oka from Nijni Novgorod to Mourom, and back again from Mourom to Nijni Novgorod.

I have also gone all the way down the Volga, from Nijni Novgorod to Astrakhan; and I will try to write some account of my experiences during the two journeys.

Of all human means of locomotion over long distances, I have always, since the days of Watt and Fulton, given my preference to the river steam-boat.

The associations of my earliest youth date from the rise and progress of steam-navigation; my first experience was made on board the 'Papins' on the Rhone, and the 'Hirondelles' on the Saône, before the safety-valve was invented, or before French engineers had

learnt to use it; and when to the charms of novelty, and of the rosy-faced, full-bodied Burgundian dames and damsels sitting here and there on the deck, with their demure eyes riveted on their everlasting netting or knitting, was added the excitement of a chance of being blown up, or scalded to death by the boiler bursting.

Since then, on the Rhine or the Moselle, on the Swiss or the Italian lakes, on the Hudson or the Ohio, I have enjoyed pleasures which men of all tastes have shared with me.

To delight in fine scenery, to be amused with the groups of pretty women and rosy children, to be interested in the talk of fellow-travellers, or to wonder at their oddities and absurdities, is natural to all of us, especially when we are young. But my partiality was not grounded on mere accessories. My attachment to the "Silent Highway" was independent of the locality, or of the physiognomy of the company. It was for its sake alone that I loved the steam-boat.

The steam-boat, not the steam-ship—my ideas of the sea are quite Johnsonian; half a score voyages across the Atlantic have not made me proof against sea-sickness, nor re-assured me about all dangers of a vessel bumping against an iceberg, or burning down to the water-edge.

I am perhaps not exactly afraid of a maritime life,

but neither am I particularly fond of it. To roam all over the world, with one's home within wooden walls; to move towards the journey's end day and night without effort, almost without perception on one's part; to eat, drink, or sleep; to read, write, and think, with a fair allowance of free air and healthful exercise, knowing all the time that every minute brings you one minute nearer to your goal—I esteem all this a great advantage. But to have all the good without the alloy of any of the evil, I must be journeying, not on salt, but on fresh, water.

“But,” my reader will say, “but on Russian rivers! Along flat, sandy banks, through a country ‘tame in outline and monotonous in colour,’ as a recent traveller describes it, what pleasure can there be to compensate a man for the closeness of his cabin, his indifferent fare, and the army of light cavalry and heavy infantry likely enough to give battle to him in his berth? Life on a Russian river-boat must be ‘intensely monotonous;’ and what a ‘bore’ must it not be after a week or a fortnight’s journey!”

Granted: But, my dear sir, what of a week, or even of a whole day and night’s experience of a droski, or a tarantass? The river-boat at least carries you without cramping, or jolting, or stifling you with dust, or upsetting you in the mud. There is surely nothing in a Russian river-boat to make you regret the accom-

modation of an average Russian hotel. You travel nearly as fast as by a Russian railway-train, and on the quarter-deck, at least, none of your Russian fellow-passengers grudges you a breath of fresh air.

After all, travelling by any conveyance, when the bloom of novelty is over, has its inconveniences, and one must put up with a choice of evils.

Our acquaintance with river travelling on the Oka, a tributary of the Volga, was too short to give rise to any sense of weariness.

Everything was ready for a start as we came on board the good steamer 'Vaseletz,' at 11 o'clock in the morning. Punctually as the hour struck there was a moment of solemn silence on deck; the man at the wheel was in his place; the captain on his right hand, the mate on his left, and about a score of best-dressed passengers, all men, stood round in a group.

"Ab Jove principium." All these men, without waiting for a signal, doffed their caps, devoutly bowing and crossing themselves, thus mutely but solemnly suing for Heaven's assistance on their voyage.

It is a primitive pious custom honoured in the observance; proving the existence among the Russians of that conservative spirit which amongst us keeps up the practice of the Speaker reading prayers before the sitting in the House of Commons.

The religious performance did not detain us two seconds, and we were at once in mid-stream.

On our left hand was the long, high ridge on which the upper town of Nijni Novgorod is built ; on our right spread the marsh on which the Nijni fair wallows ; and for many miles, as we proceeded, we had the same hilly range, the same half-drowned plain, on either side.

The two banks that wall in the broad stream advance or recede at every turn as the land lies, here towering close on the water, there trending off at a great distance out of sight ; and between them—now on one side, now on the other—there lies a vast extent of debatable ground broken up in sand-hills and sand-hollows, where the waters run riot, branching out into many channels, wearing out one side and filling up the other ; perpetually altering their course, perplexing by their endless vagaries, and tasking the experience and skill of the navigator, who now and then runs his vessel aground, where he sticks fast for hours or days, relying rather on his guardian angels and saints than on his own manly endeavour, to get him afloat again.

The scenery as we paddled up, hour after hour, was lonely and dreary, as all must admit. For the first few miles indeed we had enough to do threading our way out of the crowd of steamers and barges on their way to the fair, and we needed a sharp look-out and skilful

pilotage to avoid a collision ; but that pleasurable excitement was over without the shadow of an accident, and we soon had the river almost all to ourselves.

Hardly anywhere a hut, a tree, a living thing to enliven the view ; and one is driven to regret even the absence of the crocodiles of the Nile, and of the alligators of the Parana or the Amazon. Now and then, however, we came to a village, straggling for miles along the bank, its log-houses, dingy-brown with age, emerging out of the ragged foliage of their gardens, the carrion-crows starting from their perches on the house-tops, and cawing lustily, perhaps to bless, perhaps to curse, our arrival.

There is life there ; every cottage in its own plot of ground, with its fair allowance of air and sunlight, with its barns, sheds, and shanties facing the river ; for land is a mere drug in Russia, and every hind is welcome to as much space as he requires, and the only penalty he may have to pay for it is the necessity of trudging in the mud for miles, whenever he has occasion to call on his priest, or his elder, or on any of the miscalled neighbours in his far-reaching hamlet.

Further on, at some of the main stations, the village rises to the dignity of a town.

The place may perhaps not be larger—it may not be so large as the village ; but it stands high on the bank, all crowned with its lofty churches and monasteries

(often 20 churches for 2000 inhabitants), every church glorying in its gilt, silvered, or gaudily-painted dome and belfry, or on its cluster of domes and belfries, surmounted by huge crosses on every ball, balloon, and pinnacle; the houses whitewashed; the trees of the gardens and avenues in something like trim; with an aspect of well-being, and neatness, and refinement which perhaps might not bear too close a scrutiny.

For Russia works and Russia grows rich, whatever the Government may do; and all is not church-pageantry or monastic indolence in her communities.

Amid the row of church-steeple you catch a glimpse of factory chimneys. One place has attained renown for its cutlery; another for its tannery; a third for its saddlery, glass, or crockery. And in many of the forsaken estates of the half-ruined nobility you will find, as we shall presently see, iron-works, coal-mines, and factories of all kinds; the emancipated serf quitting the field for the workshop; an imperfect husbandry being everywhere superseded by a homely but useful industry.

Far more than with the sight of the towns, and of the crowd of passengers landing and embarking, and of the fruit-sellers and hawkers of all manner of goods, haggling, and chaffering, and filling the piers and stations with bustle and clamour and not unamusing hubbub — we are delighted with the enormous barges which we meet or overtake at every two or three miles'

interval, slowly and laboriously plying up or down the sluggish stream ; heavily-laden barges or strings of barges, deep down in the water ; all rough, and uncouth, and mud-stained, yet some of them still retaining, though faded, the colours with which the builder painted them many years now gone—painted them with some of the quaintness, though not with the splendour or style, of the Bucentaur at Venice ;—the barges all towed by horses, by double files of horses, by double files of 10, in many instances even of 20 and 30, small but wiry and hardy Tartar-bred nags—the teams now struggling deep in the water like otters, now tugging up the high, steep banks like rats ; now tumbling and rolling in the sand like kids ; no sooner down than up again, frisking and gambolling, shaking the cheering bells about their ears, and neighing joyously in response to the lusty shouts, or the wild, monotonous notes of the chant of their drivers.

We had lovely weather for our trip ; and who can describe the glamour by which mere sunrise or sunset tints can relieve the sameness and tameness of this river-landscape—burnishing into gold the dun sand-bank, deepening into emerald the pale, moist weeds in the glade between the thin forest fringes, or suffusing with ruby the ashy clouds hanging sullenly between heaven and earth on the limitless horizon.

I was up at four in the morning as we neared

Mourom, and was surprised to see, at a great distance, on the right bank, the place that the map most unmistakably laid down on the left. It rose before me like a streak of white mist floating high up in the air over the hazy landscape, a weird phantom city ; its towers and domes shaping and dissolving themselves in the dawning light, and leaving us doubtful whether what we saw was solid substance, or a mere shadow and optical delusion.

Anon we come to a winding in the river ; then to another, and a third ; and our will-o'-the-wisp of a town went flitting and shifting its ground, now on our right, now on our left, here and there, and nowhere at all, tantalizing and mocking us, as it were, playing hide and seek, till, more than one hour later, at a sudden turning, the engine roared ; the boat was eased and stopped, and there, sure enough, rose Mourom above us on the ravine, and on the same left bank where tradition assures us it has stood these thousand years.

There is not much after all in Mourom to repay a traveller for the trouble he may take coming to see it, though the town is old, and has long held the rank of a city in the province of Vladimir, and was the hallowed spot where, 598 years ago, the Bishop of the Diocese, having to go up the Oka to Riazan and Pereyaslav, spread out his mantle on the water, and was wafted up against stream with as much ease and safety as if

he had learnt the trick from that holy Archbishop of Armagh, who never used any other raft or craft than his upper garment to fare across the St. George's Channel.

Mourom, however, with all its ancient history and hagiology, its cathedral of the twelfth century, and all its past and present wonders, was not the goal of my journey.

We proceeded two hours further up the Oka, to the Doschatova Station, where we arrived towards noon, after a fourteen hours' journey, and whence a good carriage, drawn by three fine grey horses, took me over a seven versts' broad, sandy track to Vyksa and the Vyksunsky iron-works.

The Vyksa estate extends over a surface of 150,000 *desiatines*, or a little above 400,000 acres of ground. It belonged, I know not how long ago, to the Shepeleft family, and is now the property of a lady of that house, married to one of the many Princes Galitzin.

The former owners found rich mines of iron ore on the estate, and set to work to turn them to useful purposes; but, owing either to mismanagement or extravagance, they had burdened both the estate and its iron-works with debt to the amount of about 1,500,000 roubles, half its estimated value.

It was then farmed out to an English Company, who took upon themselves the management of the whole property, paying three-fifths of the profits, both of the

land and of the works, to the proprietors ; and engaging, besides, to liquidate the debt by yearly instalments, claiming for themselves the remaining two-fifths of the revenue. As a part of their own share of the revenue, they were to collect and appropriate the *obrok* or tribute which the peasants still owed to the landlords as compensation for the land allotted to them at the time of their emancipation, in 1861.

This item of the revenue did not amount to much, for, as we have seen, the main portion of the interest of the serfs' ransom money was due to the State which had redeemed them, and only one-fifth of it was still to be paid to the landowner. In the case of the Vyksa estate, I was told it amounted to 60,000 roubles.

For a few years after taking possession the English Company seemed to thrive. They repaired and improved the old works, opened new ones, imported efficient machinery, and received important orders for shells and other materials from the Imperial War Office.

Unfortunately a destructive thaw this last spring (1881) burst one of their reservoirs, a catastrophe which, besides the loss of seventeen lives, caused the ruin of several scores of dwelling-houses, stores, and workshops, flooding and ravaging the land for many miles around.

To what extent this mishap was made to play the part of Caleb Balderstone's thunderstorm in the Wolfscrag dinner entertainment, I was not informed.

But it seems that in the straits arising from the catastrophe the Company fell back on their resource of the peasants' *obrok*, and exacted payment with so little tact or discretion, that they lost whatever popularity they had—and as foreigners they could never have boasted a great deal of it—without, however, being able to enforce payment. They applied to the Government for redress, and the answer was that “an Imperial Commission was busy with a revision of the Emancipation Act, with a view to the relief of the over-burdened peasants, and that till the Commission had come to the end of their inquiry” (that is probably not till doomsday) “the collection of the *obrok* should be suspended.”

The Company, driven into a corner by this humane, perhaps, but high-handed and one-sided decision, and harassed besides by some contention with the proprietors respecting the consumption of wood for the furnaces, made up their mind to throw up their unprofitable undertaking.

They listened to the proposals of General Struve, an engineer officer of high distinction, to whom Russia is indebted for many important public works, and especially for the finest bridge on the Neva at St. Petersburg.

The General, whose activity seems equal to any extent of private as well as of public enterprise, and who has already a large iron establishment of his own at

Kolomna, said to be doing well, is likely to handle the Vyksunski works with equal success.

My expectations of seeing at Vyksa an English enterprise in a flourishing condition were, therefore, disappointed.

I was kindly received by the present manager, a Londoner, who had been in charge of the works for several years, and under whose auspices they had prospered, but who had given them up, and gone home to England before the evil days came, and had now been sent back in a hurry to wind up accounts, and save whatever might yet be saved out of the wreck.

With great kindness this gentleman took me over the works and grounds, driving me to distances of twenty and thirty miles with his fine teams of grey, roan, and black horses, a stud, however costly, that was not superfluous for the daily use of the manager himself and of the numerous staff of his lieutenants; for everything in this establishment was on a vast scale, the combination of agricultural with industrial labour necessitating a great variety of clerks, accountants, under-managers and overseers.

The place was not without interest to me, as it gave me an insight into those economical conditions of Russia with which I particularly wished to become acquainted.

Here was an estate of above one-third of a million of acres, 100 versts in length, with a large palace, gardens

and park, hot and green-houses; altogether a princely estate, with a score of villages and a population of 105,000 souls, with a soil marshy or sandy here and there, but, on the whole, by no means irreclaimably barren, with plenty of game and capital fisheries, and with mines that could be made to yield two or three millions of poods of iron ore yearly (the pood 36·08 lbs. English), and all that was only valued at 3,000,000 roubles (the rouble about 2s. 6d.), and it could not easily, if thrown into the market, find a purchaser at that price.

A *desiatine* (2·86 English acres) of the best land on this estate (and as a rule throughout the central provinces, say this of Vladimir, and the others that surrounded Moscow, Riazan, Tula, Yaroslav, Twer, etc., the granary, as they are considered, of the northern agricultural zone) cannot under the present system of cultivation be made to yield more than five or six roubles yearly, and labour is not found on any reasonable terms, for the peasant proprietors have enough to do tilling their own lands; and, if they wish to hire themselves out, they prefer the work and wages they can get at the factories, and are with difficulty chained to the soil by such ties as still bind them to their commune.

Of the labourers on the Vyksa estate, I am told, as soon as the work at the iron foundries slackened, several

thousands who were thrown out of employment have already migrated to Nijni or to other places, crowding the various industrial establishments in the towns or their neighbourhood.

The field, as I elsewhere hinted, is very rapidly being forsaken for the workshop; for though the peasant owns land and has to pay tribute for it, he finds that the factory supplies the means both of supporting himself and of paying the *obrok* better than his land would ever do, whether he cultivated it himself, or had it cultivated by his women or by his neighbours for his account.

The land is not a sufficient inducement, nor is the *obrok* a sufficiently heavy burden to fetter down the half-emancipated boor. Were the emancipation complete, were the boor rid of the *obrok*, and as free from his commune as he is from his former master, it is questionable whether any allotment of land (unless it were so ample as to make him a large proprietor, and consequently an employer of labour and grinder of labourers) would be a sufficient temptation to win him back from the factory where he has such bright prospects of "bettering himself."

Any measure interfering with the established right of land, or disturbing the relations between capital and labour, will not improve the condition of one class of labourers without aggravating that of other classes below it.

Russia is soon finding out how much easier it was to free her serfs than to create a set of freemen able and willing to fill the gaps emancipation has made, or is rapidly making, in their ranks.

One thing in all this affair of the Vyksunski works passes my understanding: how an English Company, however desperately at a loss they might be for the investment of their money, should undertake any work of such magnitude in a country of which they knew so little as to suppose that they could recoup themselves of any part of their outlay out of the peasants' *obrok*.

That tribute which neither the old proprietor with all the ascendancy of his former local authority, nor the State with all the appliances of its material strength, and the instrumentality of its communal organization, could easily wrest from the boors' clutches, was surely not likely to fall spontaneously into the hands of a lot of aliens, who disposed of no other means of coercion than what the common law afforded, and whose claims, arising from a private contract to which the rustics were no party, could not be made intelligible to them.

"Surely," the peasants must have thought, "our old master, who has been made to resign his right of ownership over us, could never have had the power to sell us to these strangers."

So it was, however, and from this instance it may be seen with what little wisdom, with what little knowledge

of Continental matters even honest English joint-stock companies are apt to proceed to business.

Need we wonder, after this, if English capitalists are so ready to turn their bright sovereigns into the mere dry leaves of Turkish or Spanish stock, or if there is a scramble wherever such a rich speculation as a Timbuktoo Loan, or an Atmospheric Railway to the top of the Chimborazo comes into the Money Market ?

We made a stay of three or four days at Vyksa, rambling over the spacious halls of its palace, a huge but somewhat tumble-down building, though neither its style nor its dusty and rickety furniture could be much more than a century old.

It may, however, stand on a more ancient foundation, as the manager's wife, an Englishwoman, alluded to the "Harem" in one of the low wings in the rear of the State apartments—an evidence, if any were wanted, of the Asiatic and Mussulman customs to which Christian Russia adhered up to the time that Peter the Great, by a special ukase and code of regulations, bade his subjects be sociable and throw open their houses for routs and assemblies, of which he with great minuteness prescribed the hours and forms, particularly enacting that lovely woman should be the first and dearest ornament of all social entertainments.

We also roamed along the grass-grown avenues of the park, visited the village and the village church—a

very tall church with an enormous bell without a belfry, raised on three sticks just above the ground, where every passing urchin on his way to school administers it a rap with his knuckles, delighting in its silver tinkle—and extended our exploration all across the park to a retired spot where the former proprietors had a pet nunnery, one of the ordinary appurtenances of great Russian houses in olden times.

The nunnery, in contrast with the ecclesiastical establishment of the village, consisted of a very low church with a very high steeple. We walked freely into the nuns' plain premises, asking to be shown to the top of the steeple, from which, we were told, nearly the whole of the vast estate could be surveyed, and found the sisterhood sociable and obliging, unveiled and in coloured dresses, busy with baking and washing, and other domestic *chores*, like any housewives, and not only ready to comply with our wishes with respect to the steeple, but also volunteering to show us their kitchen and parlour, the refectory, and even the prioress' cell,—one of the prettiest and youngest of the lot having been appointed our guide, and taking the few kopeks we dropped into her palm at parting, with a smile and a curtsy that were as coquettish as they could possibly be without ceasing to be seraphic.

CHAPTER XI.

THE VOLGA.

Steam-boats on the Volga—River Scenery—Kasan—Tartars Wild and Tame—Tartar Houses—Tartar Women—Russians and Tartars—Christians and Moslems—Russian and Turkish Tolerance—The Mayor of Kasan—The Cities of the Volga—The Kama—One Route to Siberia—The Longest Bridge—Another Route to Siberia—The Lower Volga—Agricultural Districts—German Colonies—Russians and Foreigners—The Russian Winter.

WE descended the Oka in the 'Dmitry Donskoi,' a boat inconveniently crowded, and in very hot weather. At every station we took up multitudes of the rural population on their way to the Nijni fair; a good and well-behaved kind of people if seen at a distance; but not particularly delightful to the eye, the ear, and the other senses when in too close a contact.

But at Nijni we put ourselves into the hands of the most obliging manager of the so-called "American steamers," a kind of river-boats, the model of which the manager himself had introduced as a novelty from the United States, and which has been extensively adopted by several other steam-navigation companies, the boats

of about half a score of which ply on the waters of the Volga. The "American floating palaces," however, maintain their ground against all competition, and deserve the preference that the majority of passengers award them, as they leave nothing to desire on the score of cleanly, comfortable, and even luxurious accommodation.

There are as many as 700 steam-boats on the Volga between Nijni Novgorod and Astrakhan, a number by no means exceeding the requirements of its enormous trade; the picturesque but primitive practice of towing up heavy barges by horses, which amused us on the Oka, being here discontinued.

We stayed a week longer at Nijni, where the fair was now at its height, to allow the heat to abate, and in the early days of September we got ready for our southward course down the stream.

We came down from Nijni as far as Kasan in nineteen hours, in the 'Putnik,' a boat belonging to the Somolet Company; but at Kasan we found the American boat 'Benardaki,' and in it we took our passage to Astrakhan.

It is hardly possible to travel on the Volga without falling in love with the great river at first sight.

The range of low hills which we had on our right as we descended the Oka continued now on the same side

as we came down the Volga. The Volga, however, has nothing of the wild, erratic instincts of its tributary. It is a grand, calm, dignified stream, keeping to its course as a respectable matron, and gliding down in placid loveliness, without weir or leap, fall or rapids, or break of any kind—a fine, broad, almost unrippled sheet of water, with an even, steady, and grandly monotonous flow, like that of the stanzas of Tasso.

Its width, so far as eye can judge, does not greatly exceed that of the Thames at Gravesend; but it is always the same from the bridge at Twer above Moscow to the only other bridge, one mile in length, between Syzran and Samara; everywhere the same “full bumper,” for a run of 2000 English miles.

Though the Volga is numbered among the European rivers, and has its sources on the Valdaï hills between the European cities, St. Petersburg and Moscow, it is a frontier stream, and seemed intended to form the natural line of demarcation between two parts of the world—between two worlds.

Up to the middle of the sixteenth century Kasan was the advanced guard of the Tartar hordes. These wandering tribes, which, profiting by dissensions among the Russian princes, overcame and overran all Russia, weakened in their turn by division, fell back from the main part of the invaded territory, but still held for some time their own on the Volga, from Kasan to

Astrakhan, till they were utterly routed and brought under Russian sway by Ivan the Terrible.

Even then, however, though their strength was broken, their spirit was untamed. The men of high warrior caste who survived their defeat sought a refuge among their kindred tribes further east, at Samarkand, Bokhara, and Khiva, where the Russians have now overtaken them; but a large part of the mere multitude laid aside without giving up their arms, passively accepted without formally acknowledging the Czar's sway, and abided in their tents,—swallowed at once, but very leisurely digested, by all-absorbing Russian civilization.

Large bodies of the nation, however, migrated *en masse* from time to time, the lands they left vacant being rapidly filled up by bands of Cossacks, and by foreign (chiefly German) colonists.

For more than three centuries, though already mistress of Siberia and victorious in remote Asia, Russia proper might be considered as ending at the Volga; so that most of the older and most important towns south of Kasan, and north of Astrakhan, such as Simbirsk, Syzran, Volsk, Saratof, Kamyshin, and Tzaritzin, lie on the right, or Russo-European bank of the stream.

Kasan, once the residence of a redoubted horde, was probably, under Tartar sway, in a great measure a mere

encampment, chiefly a city of tents; for whatever the guide-books may say, there is no positive evidence of its present buildings belonging to a date anterior to the Russian conquest.

Its situation probably recommended itself to the Tartars chiefly on the score of strength; for although it stands high above the river, its present distance from it is at least three miles, and it is surrounded by a sandy and marshy plain, intersected by the channels of the Kasana river, erratic water-courses which may have proved efficient obstacles to the onset of an invader, but which raise no less serious hindrances to the conveyance of goods from the landing-place to the town; an inconvenience hitherto not removed by the tramway, as it as yet only carries passengers.

Kasan is on the main line of communication between Central Russia and Siberia.

The travellers bound to that bourne embark here on steamers that go down the Volga as far as its confluence with the Kama, a tributary stream, and thence ascend the Kama, which is navigable all the way to Perm. From Perm a railway runs up to the Pass of the Ural mountains to Ekaterinenburg, probably to be in course of time continued to Tiumen, Tobolsk, Tomsk, Irkutsk, the Baikal Lake, the Chinese frontier at Kiatkha, the banks of the Amoor, and the shores of the Pacific Ocean.

Along this route it is calculated that some £3,000,000 worth of merchandise are brought yearly from Siberia down the Kama and up the Volga to the Nijni Novgorod fair.

Kasan, however, is not as yet joined by any line of railway with Russia and Europe; it has no bridge on the Volga, and in the winter months, that is, for half the year, its intercourse with the civilized world can only be carried on by the primitive aid of the sledge.

In spite of all these drawbacks, however, Kasan is a highly flourishing city. It has a population of 90,000 to 100,000 inhabitants, one-fourth of whom are Tartars.

These descendants of the old nomad race are now here at home, and live in the city perfectly at peace with their Russian fellow-subjects, though being Mahometans, they have distinct, if not separate, quarters, and mosques and a burial-ground of their own. It would seem impossible for two races which have so little reason for mutual good-will, to show so little disposition to quarrel. But it should be remembered that Slav and Tartar were not in former times so far asunder in manners, in language, in polish, nor so free from admixture in blood as the Russians fondly believe; and, for what concerns religion, both Tartars and Russians seem equally satisfied with their respective creeds, and there is no attempt at proselytism on either

side. On the one hand, the Russian clergy show no particular gift or inclination to play the part of apostles among the heathen. Their attempts at conversion are only prompted by worldly motives, and in obedience to the political views and interests of the Government; and, in some instances, the priests are satisfied with parading pseudo-neophytes, who have been bribed to receive baptism, and only profess Christianity while secretly still practising Islamism. On the other hand, the Mahometans pity, even more than they despise, the "idolatry" of the Orthodox Church; laugh at the zeal which made their conquerors rob their city of the "Holy Mother of Kasan" to build her a mean copy of the Roman St. Peter's at St. Petersburg, while they, themselves, cling honestly to their intelligible principle of the One God in heaven, with the One human Guide and Lawgiver on earth.

Be it borne in mind, also, that although the main dogmas of the two creeds are as wide asunder from one another as the two poles of the universe, there are many notions respecting man's duties, his hopes and fears, his origin and destination, with endless traditions, practices, and gross superstitions, which are equally rife among the two races, and which bear witness either to their common Eastern derivation, or to an intellectual and moral sympathy arising from their frequent intercourse and admixture.

This may be seen especially in the treatment women met with in Old Russia, where, as I said, they were shut up in their own inner apartments still called "harems," and even buried in separate vaults and cemeteries, a clear evidence that the doubt still lingered as to their having a soul, and being destined to be partakers of immortality. It may be seen in the reverence and almost worship with which the Russians, like the Turks, still look upon idiots or maniacs, especially those that strip off their clothes and go about in a state of nature; such "saints" being in old Moscow as in modern Stamboul supposed to be invested with transcendent miraculous powers; one of them, Nicholas the stark-naked, having been instrumental in temporarily saving Novgorod the Great by actually terrifying Ivan the Terrible, who had vowed in his heart that of the rebel city there should not remain one stone upon another, but who actually fulfilled his vow and laid it utterly waste, some time later, when the redoubted naked saint was no longer there, and only sane and decently clad divines stood between him and the object of his wrath (1569).*

It is only in this sense of utter indifference and mutual contempt that both the Russian and the Turkish

* For the two episodes in the reign of Ivan IV., in which he first spared and then destroyed the great mediæval emporium of Russia, see the brilliant though fantastic description of Hepworth Dixon, in his 'Free Russia,' Vol. II. chap. xiii.

Government deserve that praise for religious toleration which has been so indiscriminately awarded to them. A Czar, as a Russian Orthodox, or a Sultan, as a true Moslem, may look with contemptuous indulgence on all creeds but his own; but of his own he is proud and sufficiently jealous. Vex him not with attempts at proselytism, shock him not with a single case of apostasy. He does not care, he hardly wishes for new sheep to enter his fold; but woe to the sheep that being in it would stray from it; woe to the wolf in missionary's clothes that would tamper with the sheep and lead them astray! Were it not for pure shame and the dread of public opinion, proselytism or apostasy in this Orthodox Empire would meet with as little mercy as from the Papacy at Rome or the Inquisition at Seville.

Some of the Kasan Tartars are men of great wealth, enterprising merchants, carrying on important trading operations with Central Asia, Persia, and, when international relations allow, even China.

Some of them are also great landowners, and they indifferently employ Tartars or Russians for their field work; the Russians for their own part showing no reluctance to avail themselves of Tartar labour in their farms or factories, or for domestic purposes. Your tamed Tartar is an intelligent, laborious, and sober workman, like the Chinaman; and like the Chinaman, also, he is unpopular among the lower classes of Christians,

because he will put up with what seem to his competitors low wages.

At the Nijni fair, as we have seen, as well as at St. Petersburg and Moscow, Tartar servants are in great demand.

One must observe, however, that these Tartars have been at all times the freest of men. That system of serfdom which was forced upon the Russian peasantry to cure them of their nomadic propensities, and chain them to the soil which depended on them for its culture, was never applied, or even attempted to be applied, to Russia's Tartar subjects. Perhaps the Russians, like the Romans of old, looked upon some of these conquered people as too good, and upon others as not good enough, to be slaves.

Though the Tartars can be made into good husbandmen, they are not so by choice, and it is rather in the towns, no matter for how heavy a work, that they make themselves useful wherever we turn ; to whatever classes of men we look throughout the Empire, we are met with the same doubt as to the men on whom the duty of the cultivation of the too broad land of Russia may devolve for the future.

For I must insist that there is, after all, and whatever recent travellers may say to the contrary, very great affinity, if not actual consanguinity, between Russian and Tartar. The Russian peasant down to the

present day was, and in some measure is, still an enslaved Tartar: he is ever at heart a nomad. Give both races absolute freedom, make them into a class of peasant proprietors, cease to interfere with the movements of the thousand pilgrims, pedlars, itinerant artisans, or actual "runaways" as they are called, vagrants, beggars, and worse, that crowd the highways throughout the Empire, living on alms and dodging the police, and you will soon have nearly the whole race on the tramp as it was in the days of Boris Godunoff; and it will become very questionable whether many will stop at home for that steady and wholesome, but plodding and irksome, field-work which ought to be the mainstay of this Empire, as of any other well-regulated State.

The Kasan Tartars of the upper classes are among the best educated and polished of the Mahometans. The Russian civil law does not, in any manner, interfere with their domestic arrangements. It allows them to take and divorce as many wives as they please; and their pleasure generally is to have a span of them, few venturing on the equally lawful but less manageable four-in-hand. Most of the Tartars also stick to their first and second choice for better, for worse.

Their ladies have almost altogether discarded, if they ever adopted, the Eastern yashmak. They only wear a shawl on their heads, which they now and then

prudishly or coquettishly draw before their faces when they fancy that a Giaour gazes at them with unbecoming intensity. I observed, however, that they stood their ground with tolerable equanimity when the offender was only a young and good-looking man with a lustrous pair of sharp eyes; but drew down their shawl with a jerk of rage and with a string of deep curses when the scrutiny was attempted by a purblind elderly man like myself, who raised his double eye-glass to his nose for the gratification of his foolish idle curiosity. Fortunately, and as a matter of course, their squeamishness was in an inverse ratio with their youth and beauty.

Tartar dwellings, also, though they are all "detached," as the London phrase is, and have a peculiar, almost tent-like character fitting the taste of the former children of the desert, do not here exhibit those long lines of blank walls and bristling high railings and palings behind which jealous Islamism in the Levant and North Africa loves to entrench itself.

The Tartar houses at Kasan are small, plain, uniform tenements, with three windows of an upper floor in front, surmounted by a low and squat triangular gable, with door and ground-floor windows all facing and opening into the street, with narrow strips of garden on either side and behind, liberally visible and easily accessible to the passer-by. The windows have flowers

and leafy plants doing duty instead of *jalousies*, curtains, or blinds.

We were only in Kasan for a day, and made but one acquaintance ; and that, however flattering, was not as satisfactory as it might have been.

I had a letter recommending me to the Mayor of the town, who was also a Professor at the University, and to whom the place looked up as the most distinguished, enlightened, and patriotic of its citizens.

I waited upon him at the Town-hall, his office being the only place in which he admitted visitors. I went up a broad staircase, threaded a long suite of apartments all crowded with clerks, the scratching of whose pens was the only sound audible, and came at last into the presence of the gentleman I wanted, whom I found sitting before a large desk busy writing, in a large room, where greater than in any other was the crowd of clerks, their silence, and the scratching of pens.

I was shown in and presented to the great man in dumb show, and was so overawed by the stillness and solemnity of the place, that I merely made my obeisance and laid upon the desk before the Mayor the introductory letter, without uttering one word.

The Mayor opened the letter ; he ran over it at a glance ; welcomed me with a nod and a smile, and offered his service in a whisper.

I told him who I was in the same undertone, and made him understand on what errand I came.

“Yes, yes! Just so,” he answered, always in the same smothered voice. “You want information respecting the city and government of Kasan. The governor is absent; just so; you are a stranger—from England; just so—here I am; you could not have addressed yourself to a better man. Here I am, at your service.”

As he said this, he put up his hand behind his ear like an old father confessor preparing to receive the revelations of a fair penitent.

I stood up beside his desk, with my interpreter on my left hand, useless in this case, as the Mayor was evidently a well-educated man, and spoke fluent and excellent French. He could not motion me to a seat, as there were none by his side, nor did he point to a chair, for they were all far off, nor did he rise or lay down his pen. He evidently thought that whatever business there might be between us, could be easily transacted, as the Italians say, *su due piedi*. But he forgot that I alone was “on my two feet.”

I tried to humour him, and addressed him a few questions, always with bated breath and in the lowest voice I could utter, about the site of the town, the civil laws as concerning Mahometans, &c. The Mayor had a quick understanding and a ready utterance. His answers were laconic, but clear, precise, and to the point.

He was thoroughly conversant with the subject, and he discussed it without hesitation or reticence. I could not, as he said, have been addressed to a man better answering my purpose. But there was something abnormal, awkward, and almost ludicrous in our position, and after a few minutes it became unendurable.

"I see, Monsieur le Maire," I said, "that my visit was ill-timed. You are very busy."

He raised his eyebrows, and made a wide sweep, pointing with his pen round the room.

"You see," said he.

"I see. An idle traveller has no right to rob a busy functionary of his precious time. I am infinitely obliged to you, and I wish you good morning."

He half rose from his seat with a bow; and followed me with his eyes in my retreat with a satisfied expression of countenance, which said as plainly as words could say:

"For this relief much thanks."

As I left the Town-hall and walked on the wide sidewalk of the long and broad main street of the city, I could not help thinking that the time devoted by the Mayor and Professor to his municipal duties seemed to be well-bestowed, however heavy the trouble might be to him, or the expense of all that army of *employés* to the ratepayers. Surely, I thought, had the Mayor been a Prime Minister, he could scarcely have needed

a more formidable army of ready pens, or kept them more assiduously to their day's task.

But the result was visible; none of the finest quarters of St. Petersburg itself could be more clean, or airy, or smooth and fresh than the new part of this former Tartar town.

The town has its Kremlin, on the site of the old citadel, with its cathedral, and other churches, and several "telescope towers," if they may be so called, built on several stories, dwindling in size from floor to floor as they rise one above the other, so that one can conceive how they might easily sink into one another and shut up like a spy-glass. The great brick tower of Pier Crescenzi in Rome is such a tower; and there are many in the same style at Moscow and in most other old Russian cities. Kasan has several public edifices of some pretension: the Admiralty; the University—one of the seven of the Empire, etc. But we had enough of it all after two or three hours, and were glad to shun the heat of the rest of the day in the cool sitting-room of Commonen's Hotel, which alone may be taken as a voucher for the high degree of civilization reached by Kasan.

We gave even less time to the other cities of the Volga, not thinking it always worth while to alight at all the stations, though the steamer stopped at some of these for many a long, weary hour.

With the exception of Kasan, Samara, and Astrakhan, the most important cities are, as I said, on the right or Russian bank of the river; and three of them, Syzran, Saratof, and Tzaritzin, are connected by various railways with Moscow and all the other important centres of life in the Empire.

The Volga, which between Nijni Novgorod and Kasan flows in an almost straight easterly direction, takes a turn to the southward after leaving Kasan and the confluence of the Kama; but it makes a loop below Simbirsk, turning eastward to Samara, and again west to Syzran, after which it resumes its southerly course to Saratof, Tzaritzin, and Astrakhan.

The railway from Moscow to Syzran, upon reaching Syzran, crosses the Volga on an iron bridge, one verst and a half, or one English mile, in length, and high enough to allow the largest steamer to pass without lowering its funnel—a masterpiece of engineering, greatly admired by the people here, who describe it as the longest bridge in Russia and in the world.

We went under it at midnight by a dim moonlight which barely allowed us to see it looming in the distance not much bigger than a telegraph-wire drawn all across the valley, the gossamer line of the bridge and all the landscape round striking us as dreamlike and unreal.

After crossing the river the railway proceeds to Samara, and hence 419 versts further to Orenburg, a

large and thriving place on the Ural river, the spot from which the straightest and probably the shortest way is, or will be, open to all parts of Siberia or Central Asia; preferable, I should think, to that of Perm and Ekaterinenburg above-mentioned, which is now the most frequented route.

Beyond Syzran and Samara the river scenery, which has hitherto been verdant, assumes a southerly aspect; the hill-sides sloping to the river have a parched and faded brown look; the hill-tops are bare and seamed with chalky ravines; every trace of the forests has disappeared; and it is only at rare intervals that the banks are clad with the verdure of the new growth.

What wood there was has long been burnt out by the 700 steamers at work on the river; and the huge piles of logs by which every pier is encumbered for half a mile round are supplied from the interior, which must also, in time, be exhausted, when the navigation will have to depend on coal, or naphtha, or some other combustible yet to be discovered.

Some of the steamers on the Volga already burn the refuse of naphtha instead of wood or coal.

These banks of the Lower Volga and the steppes adjoining them on either side are the grounds which the Empress Catherine opened to the enterprise of foreign (especially German) colonists. In the Government of Saratoff alone, out of a population of 1,700,000 souls,

120,000 are said to be Germans ; and it is to them, or to their fathers, that Russia is indebted for such progress as agriculture may be said to have made in these once uncultivated lands.

The Germans have turned the very steppes into fields. But although Germans, as all other men of Teutonic blood, as I before observed, are the only members of the human family who love husbandry for its own sake, even these colonies have not of late given as satisfactory results in Russia as their founders expected.

I heard complaints at Saratoff from persons having no interest to exaggerate or extenuate bare facts, that no new-comers follow now-a-days on the track of the old settlers, and that the descendants of these latter have sadly degenerated from the sterling qualities which distinguished their sires.

Disheartened by six or seven years' successive drought, and consequent bad harvests, and disappointed about the fertility of a soil which, however rich in its virgin state, was not, after all, as they might have known, inexhaustible, these grandsons of the former immigrants are taking to those very habits of indolence, slovenliness, and drunkenness, of which it was hoped that their better behaviour would cure the Russians ; and they are becoming as unprofitable to the country of their adoption as the worst description of the natives themselves.

Exception should be made in favour of the Memnonites and Moravian Brethren, whose strong religious and moral discipline resists the influence of prevailing sottishness, and whose prosperity, the result of steady work and good conduct, follows them wherever they go.

These harmless sectarians, at least the Memnonites, were not originally Germans. The sect sprung up in Holland, from which it migrated to Prussia; but its members were enticed to these Russian districts by Catherine II., who promised them exemption from that military service to which they objected on Quaker-like principles.

Whether the exemption granted by Catherine was limited to ninety years, or whether it was dreaded that the Empress's pledge might not be maintained by her successors, or to whatever other causes it may be owing, I know not; but on the promulgation of the new decrees relative to the universal and compulsory service to be enforced throughout Russia, many of these German sectarians moved off to America, where they are to be seen or heard of in various parts, as scattered and wandering about; some in Canada, some in Brazil and the Argentine Republic, even on the borders of Patagonia, so sadly at a loss for quiet and pacific new homes in these days of universal strife that some even look back with longing, and some of them have actually returned to Russia.

Wherever they are, these Memnonites are an exemplary people, and their villages are patterns of neatness, order, as well as comfort and well-being to the nations among whom they settle. The Russians, however, though they admire and envy them, look upon these strangers as men of a different stamp from themselves, and make no effort, and have no hope or even wish to raise themselves to the same standard. They are Russians, and their only desire is to remain Russians as their fathers have been before them.

The crops this season have exceeded the average, and the country is looking up. These lands of the Lower Volga are a granary, and the people seem determined to make the most of the many resources by which they may add to the revenue accruing to them from their agricultural wealth.

The conceit that Russia should aspire to independence from other nations in everything that home production can supply, has taken hold of the public mind, and, no doubt, acts as a stimulus to manifold exertion.

"Russia for the Russians" is the cry, and little regret is felt for the falling off of those colonists—Germans, Bulgarians, and others—who were hitherto welcome as leaders and instructors in every branch of agricultural and industrial enterprise. From St. Petersburg to Astrakhan this feeling of increasing

self-confidence in the Russian people is one of the phenomena that have most forcibly struck me, and, on the whole, I think it bodes good, however apt it may be to degenerate into mean and blind exclusiveness, and into vain and silly conceit.

From Nijni to Tzaritzin we have stopped at more than thirty different stations, and no pen could describe the stir and bustle of goods and passengers that awaited us at every wharf and pier.

Several of those stations are towns of 50,000 to 100,000 inhabitants, and, besides their corn trade and tobacco, they all deal in some articles of necessity or luxury, of which they produce enough for their own, if not always for their neighbours', consumption.

Everywhere one sees huge buildings—steam flour-mills, tobacco-factories, salt-mines, starch, soap, and candle manufactories, tanneries—and last, not least, palaces for the sale of *koumiss*, or fermented mare's milk, a sanitary beverage; and extensive establishments, especially near Samara, for the *koumiss* cure,—fashionable resorts as watering-places, frequented by persons affected by consumption, and other real or imaginary ailments.

There is something appalling in the thought that all this busy, and, on the whole, merry life on the banks of the Volga must come to a dead stand-still for six or seven months in the year.

I have been vainly taxing my brain to guess what

may become of the captains, mates, and crews of the 700 steamers, and of the 5000 heavy barges with which this river is now swarming; of the porters, agents, clerks, and other officials at the various stations; of the thousands of women employed to carry all the firewood from the piers to the steam-boats. What becomes of all these, and of the men and horses toiling at the steam-row-and tow-boats on the Oka, the Kama, the Don, the Dnieper, and a hundred other rivers during the long season in which the vast plains of Russia are turned into a howling wilderness of snow and ice from end to end?

Railway communication and sledge-driving may, by doubling their activity, afford employment to some of the men and beasts who would otherwise be doomed to passive and torpid hybernation. But much of the work that is practicable in other countries almost throughout the year—nearly all that is done in the open air—suffers here grievous interruption.

What should we think in England of a six months' winter, in which the land were as hard as a rock, in which all the cattle had to be kept within doors, in which the bricklayer's trowel and the road-mender's roller had to be laid aside?

And, by way of compensation, what mere human bone and muscle can stand the crushing labour by which the summer months, with their long days of twenty

hours' sunlight, must make up for the winter's forced idleness ; in a climate too, where, as far as my own experience goes, the heat is hardly less oppressive and stifling than in the level lands of Lombardy or the Emilia ?

Can we be sure that much of the indolence and sluggishness of the Russian peasantry, the untidiness and improvidence of their husbandry, their stupid observance of so many priestly holy days, and their inordinate fondness for strong drinks, are not in a great measure to be ascribed to those atmospheric influences which sap their physical and moral energies in proportion as they increase and condense the demand upon them ?

Think of it, kind reader, and consider whether Russia is not exactly the country where many of the idle wanderers who leave their homes in sheer weariness of themselves, and of everything about them, should be sent to learn, by contrast with what they would find here, to bear with the few drawbacks, and to value the many blessings of the dear fatherland which they so readily and often so unjustly abuse.

CHAPTER XII.

ASTRAKHAN.

The Delta of the Volga—Tzaritzin—The Steppe—Astrakhan—Two Friends—The Tartars—Russia and the Tartars—Tame, Half-tamed, and Untamed Tartars—Astrakhan—The City—The Suburbs—The Site—The Produce—The Fisheries—Fishing Villages—Calmuck Villages—Calmuck Princesses.

TZARITZIN is at the head of the Delta of the Volga, and it lies 580 versts above Astrakhan, which is said to be at the river's mouth, but which is still 150 versts from its roadstead or anchorage, called the Nine Feet Station; the spot on the Caspian where sea navigation really begins.

At Tzaritzin the boat stopped a whole wearisome day. Here we landed, desirous to see the place where on this side of Russia a traveller bids his farewell to the railway world. One of the great lines from Moscow ends here, and there is also a short branch, 73 versts in length, which from this station on the banks of the Volga leads across country to Kalatch on the banks of the Don.

At Tzaritzin we might have fancied ourselves in

some brand-new town in one of the remote backwoods of America. It was nothing of a place before the railway reached it. No one can foretell what it may become before the locomotive travels past it. For under present circumstances all the postal service, the light goods and time-saving passenger traffic from all parts of Russia to Astrakhan, the Caspian, and the Trans-Caspian regions, or *vice versá*, must pass between the Tzaritzin pier on the Volga and the platforms of the Tzaritzin railway-station.

We did not see much of the upstart town, for the horrible clouds of thick, dung-impregnated dust would not allow us to keep our eyes open. But we perceived that almost every trace of what was once little better than a second-rate fortress and a village was obliterated; the old inhabitants were nowhere, and a bustling set of new settlers were sharing the broad area among themselves, taking as much of it as suited their immediate wants, and extending it to the utmost limits of their sanguine expectations; drawing lines of streets at great distances, tracing the sides of broad squares and crescents, and laying the foundations of what would rise in time into shops and houses, hotels, bazaars, theatres, and churches.

Tzaritzin when we saw it was merely the embryo of a city. Those that may visit it a score of years hence will tell us what they find it.

Two more nights and a day down the sluggish waters of the main channel of the Volga landed us, on the tenth day after our departure from Nijni Novgorod, at Astrakhan, where we stayed a whole week.

At Astrakhan I was in luck. I had not been on shore three hours when I had already made two friends—friends not valued merely on account of their courteous reception and hospitable treatment, but on the score of those sterling qualities of mind and heart on which affection grounded on esteem springs up on the first interview, and is sure indefinitely to survive what is only too likely to be a parting for evermore.

One of these was an old sea-faring man, now agent for the "American Steam Navigation on the Volga."

He was by birth a Dalmatian, but had buffeted the waves of fortune's storms from early boyhood, and had been so tempered by the ordeal as to come out of it with a name that all men honoured, and with an independent position won by trade, which no one grudged or envied him, and which might have been a colossal fortune, had he not preferred to place what he had at the disposal of any one who deserved and chose to share it with him.

He was tall and strong-built, almost athletic, with a Roman countenance of the ancient type, though his name was Slavic, and he did not know of a single drop of Latin blood in his veins; he was self-educated,

unassuming, and might at first sight have been described as a "diamond in the rough," but the polish was less than skin-deep, and one could not easily have found a more clear-headed or warm-hearted companion. One had only to walk half an hour with him in the streets of the town to see his goodness reflected in the smile of all you met; for high and low had been for many years accustomed to draw as freely on his brain as on his purse, and to all in need he was "a friend indeed."

My other *rara avis* was a perfect contrast to the first in all externals, yet there was between the two that touch of good-nature that "makes the whole world kin."

This other friend was the civil and military governor of Astrakhan, and he also was extremely popular; but he had not been much more than a twelvemonth at his post. He was a nobleman of high rank, and had filled a conspicuous position both in the army and in the Imperial Household. He was of the court, courtly; and there was a becoming stateliness in his manners, which he could, however, lay aside at his pleasure, and when he saw no occasion for its display.

His stature was at least six feet five, but he was thin and somewhat bent in kindness to undersized people; he had a fine countenance with a Russian complexion, *i. e.* an ashy skin, suffused with a sanguine hue; his features were handsome, the expression benevolent; the age, to judge by the look, probably fifty.

I sat for hours with him the first day, before dinner, at dinner, and after dinner, the dialogue between us being incessant and exclusive though we were not alone; I, for my part, answering to the best of my abilities all his questions about a world from which he felt himself cut off, and discussing every subject under the sun with a freedom and unreserve I seldom met with in my intercourse with other Russians of any standing.

The governor had been in England more than once in his quality of aide-de-camp to some of the Grand Dukes. He spoke English fluently and with a good accent, and talked about his London acquaintance with that earnest and almost enthusiastic admiration of every person and everything English, which Russian diplomatists often affect, but which with him I have no doubt was heartfelt and genuine.

There was a story about this man.

The governorship of Astrakhan, like those of Archangel and of some of the remotest Siberian provinces, are often given as places of honourable banishment to noblemen or gentlemen whose presence in St. Petersburg has for some reason or other become undesirable.

My friend, I was told, had lost his sovereign's favour by his refusal to contract a marriage, suitable in many respects, and sure to advance his interests at Court, but which would have inflicted a stain on his unsullied name. It was thus to his sense of honour that he owed

his "disgrace," and, I need not say, it was that, in a great measure, that won him all good men's sincere respect and sympathy.

It was from him chiefly that I obtained such information as I needed with respect to the people entrusted to his guidance and rule.

From Tzaritzin to Astrakhan the Volga flows through the steppe, the great Asiatic grass desert extending from the Caucasus to the frontier of China. The wild tenants of this wilderness, the various tribes of Tartars, once the terror of East and West, were like a vast ocean of human beings swayed to and fro by nomadic and predatory instincts, which for centuries threatened to overwhelm and efface every vestige of the world's civilization.

The Russians who were first invested and overpowered by the flood, were able by the valour and more by the craft of their princes, first to stem the tide, then to force it back, and in the end to rear such bulwarks as might for ever baffle its fury, and prevent its further onset.

Such bulwarks were the once strong places of Kasan and Astrakhan, the former seats of Tartar hordes, which the Czars of Moscow made their bases of operations for the indefinite extension of their civilized empire over Tartar barbarism.

For the experience of centuries had proved that

the steppe was not everywhere and altogether an irreclaimable land, nor the Tartars an utterly untameable race.

Astrakhan, like Kasan, is a Russian town, of whose 50,000 inhabitants one-fourth or one-fifth at least are tamed Tartars, and the sands around which can be made to yield grapes and peaches, and a profusion of melons and water-melons.

Beyond the immediate neighbourhood, over the whole province or "Government" of Astrakhan, stretches the vast land of the steppe, the wide and thin pasture-grounds on which the Tartar tribes roam at will with their flocks; a pastoral set of men, without fixed homes, and, in our sense of the word, without laws; and yet perfectly harmless and peaceful—exempt, at least till very lately, from military service, and only paying a tribute of 45,000 roubles, at so much a head for each horse, ox, or camel, ranging over an extent of 7,000,000 dessiatines (20,000,000 acres) of land, an area of 224,514 kilometers, or about half that of France, with a population, including that of the capital, of 601,514 inhabitants.

The Tartars, mostly Kirghis, with a sprinkling of Calmucks (these latter men of peculiar breed and faith), are not without a political organization of their own, exhibiting the rudiments of self-government, somewhat analogous to that of the Russian peasants living under

the rule of their *Starosta* or village-elder, in their village commune. Each tribe acknowledges a chief, hereditary or elected, who keeps an account of its members, allots the limits of their pasture-grounds, and collects the taxes, for the regular payment of which he is responsible, on the same principle on which the village-elder in Russia bases his authority over his fellow-villagers, *i. e.* by calling the heads of families to council, and bowing to the vote of the majority.

The Imperial Government, under ordinary circumstances, interferes no further with the management of the affairs of the tribe than is necessary for the enforcement of the tribute, and the maintenance of order ; and for such purposes the governor disposes of a force of 23,000 Cossacks, who are settled with their families in villages of their own, scattered all over the province, or in the *Aoulls*, or encampments, of the Tartars themselves, living on terms of easy familiarity with their nomad fellow-subjects, with whom, indeed, many of them might claim near or remote kinship.

On this simple plan is Russia slowly but surely over-running, subduing, and, as far as may be practicable, civilizing Central Asia.

The lands of the province of Astrakhan will never perhaps be better than sandy pasture. The Tartar inhabitants will never be anything better than wandering herdsmen ; but a certain progress, even in their pastoral

habits, is already observable. Efforts are made to establish among them stores of grain and fodder to save both themselves and their cattle from the famine by which in the winter season some of their improvident tribes are frequently ravaged, and even to construct with sun-dried bricks—in the utter absence both of wood and stone—large sheds covered with skins as shelter from the inclemencies of the long winter nights.

By increasing the comfort and eventually the wealth of the Tartar, his shepherd's life will be in time thoroughly cured of the rude and savage habits that characterize it. The range of his pasture will be, if not absolutely fixed, at least circumscribed within definable limits. The tribe will gradually subside into a well-regulated, though still a wandering, community; and such surplus population as may arise from the improved conditions of pastoral life, will be attracted to the towns where so many men, originally of nomadic blood, are settled, and thrive in every branch of useful manual or menial employment.

The system that answers not unsatisfactorily in the Governments of Astrakhan, Perm, and Orenburg, may with equal success be extended to Samarcand, Khiva, Bokhara, Tashkend, Khokand, and the whole of that Central Asian region into which Russia carried her victorious arms. In the military caste of her Cossacks she has a moveable nation of mixed, but mainly of Slavic, breed, and of a muddled Christian faith; a nation

not many degrees removed from the nature and disposition of the nomads of Mongol race, and of Mahometan, Buddhistic, or semi-Pagan creeds among whom it has to enforce order.

Upon the first stage of subjugation being gone through it is found that the conquered population resolves itself into three categories: first, the "tame" Tartar who earns his livelihood as a drudge, in rare cases as a thriving trader in the towns; second, the "half-tamed" Tartar, who lives in the steppe with his tribe by the produce of his flock; and third, the "untamed," or "untameable" Tartar, who falls back from the advance of civilization, and will die, sword in hand, or starve in the last retreat when the whole region is overrun.

There are not many instances of tame Tartars going back to their former haunts and ways of living; and we have lately had no such swarming of the Tartar hives as occurred in by-gone ages, and especially during the reign of Catherine II., when a whole host of 400,000 Nogai Tartars, roused into revolt by the heavy exactions of the Imperial Government, struck their tents and migrated *en masse* from their settlements on the banks of the Volga, going back to their wild independence far away into the heart of the vast continent.

It is neither an easy nor a grateful task that Russia has taken upon herself to accomplish; she gives her gold and her blood as the price of a desert. But the

work was originally imposed upon her by the exigencies of self-defence, and its indefinite continuance has become matter of equally irresistible necessity.

Astrakhan is a modern town, with the usual broad, straight streets, most of them boasting no other pavement than sand, with brick side-walks, much worn and dilapidated, and, like those of Buenos Ayres and many other American cities, so raised above the roadway as to require great attention from those who do not wish to run the risk of broken shins.

The town has its own Kremlin, apart from the citadel. The Kremlin is a kind of cathedral-close, with the cathedral and the archbishop's palace, and several monasteries and priests' habitations. The whole town, besides, and the environs, as usual in Russia, muster more churches than they can number priests or worshippers.

In a walk of two or three miles I took outside the town and as far as the cemeteries, I had a scattered group of at least half a score of churches all around me, but there was scarcely a human habitation within sight.

The governor's palace is a low building over a row of shops in the main square of the city. The square itself and the thoroughfares were enveloped in thick clouds of blinding dust, almost as troublesome as that of Tzaritzin; but on the whole, the place is less unclean than one might expect from a population made up of

Russians, Tartars, Calmucks, Persians, Armenians, and Jews.

We drove out to see the gardens and vineyards of a young wealthy citizen whose vineyards, laid out in arbours, in the Italian fashion, are made to thrive on bare sand; pleasure-grounds on which, the owner told us, "where he spends 4000 roubles, he may hope to get about 3000 roubles' worth in grapes," having in many instances to cover the whole flooded ground with soil, and then to save the soil from drought by every contrivance of steam watering-mills and other expensive means of irrigation. For the surface of this region alternates between a marsh and a sand-bank, according to the wet or dry time of the year.

Poorer landowners, however, and market-gardeners manage to draw a better profit out of a less ruinous outlay. But the grapes are not of the best quality, and they have to run the competition of those of Italy, whence large trains laden with a great variety of fruit and vegetables have begun to travel across the Alps and along the Austrian and German railway lines, to supply the markets of Moscow and St. Petersburg.

The wines of Astrakhan, also, though not undrinkable, are inferior to those of the best Caucasian or Crimean growth.

Russia, however, is of all European countries the one in which it is most difficult to obtain a good glass of

wine to drink, native or foreign ; at least at the hotels, where either the wine-merchant or the landlord contrives so to adulterate all wines, and especially claret, as to render them almost unrecognizable to a traveller accustomed to the flavour of the genuine beverage. Russia, like Denmark, and the whole north are the helpless victims of their blind faith in those notable rogues, the Hamburg wine-manufacturers.

It is meanwhile matter of no little wonder that grapes and fruits grown on mere sand should give employment and sustenance to so considerable a class of the suburban population of this remote corner of the civilized world.

Still the great wealth of Astrakhan arises from its fisheries.

I made here the acquaintance of a young graduate of the St. Petersburg University, who had travelled hither from the capital, commissioned by the editor of the *Golos* thoroughly to inquire into and report on these fisheries ; and here are a few of the items gathered from his notebook.

The Volga and the hundred channels which constitute its delta, and the northern shores of the Caspian Sea into which they flow, yield more fish than the coasts of Norway and Newfoundland put together. The nets employed in catching them would, if laid side by side on the ground in all their length, extend over a line of 40,000

versts, or twice the distance from St. Petersburg to Tashkend and back. The annual produce of these Astrakhan fisheries — sturgeon, sterlet, salmon, pike, shad, &c.—amounts to 10,000,000 puds of fish (the pud 36 English lb. weight) of the value of 20,000,000 roubles, the herrings alone yielding a yearly income of 4,000,000 roubles. All this, though half the produce is melted into oil; and though so wasteful, clumsy, and improvident was the system on which the fisheries were conducted, that of some of the better kind of fish, especially of sturgeon, a sensible falling off in the haul is already perceptible; while other kinds, which used to be rejected as useless, are now caught and sent to market, probably on the principle that all is fish that comes to the net.

With the exception of the caviare, which is sold all over the world, the produce of these fisheries, salted or pickled, is destined for home consumption, and travels all over the empire, although as far as I have been, I have found everywhere the waters equally well-stocked by nature with every description of fish; a provident dispensation, since the Russian clergy, like the Roman Catholic, are indefatigable in their promotion of what they call “the Apostles’ trade,” by their injunction of 226 fast or fish days throughout the year.

Though the Russians may tire of giving “glory to God” by eating fish instead of flesh, they have at least plenty of the best and most wholesome, and they are

spared the abomination of feeding on the mere garbage of half-rotten herrings and pilchards, to which the poorer votaries of the Pope are reduced towards the end of Lent and the Holy Week, when the stock of fresh fish is exhausted, and meat is sin for all who have no means to bribe the priest.

One of the causes of the extraordinary development of the fish trade in Astrakhan may be that winter in these latitudes, though severe, is somewhat shorter than higher up north. The fishing seasons here are spring and autumn; but part of the work goes on also uninterruptedly throughout the winter, the practice being to break holes in the ice, however thick, at various points in a line, and to draw the nets underneath the crust from hole to hole, till they all come in with their contents to the main breach near the bank.

We went out in a steam-launch to see some of the fisheries and establishments in which the fish is cured and prepared for exportation, and although much is left to desire on the score of cleanliness and sound economy, I saw enough to feel satisfied that what I have just quoted as to the productiveness of these waters is by no means exaggerated, and that the wealth of Astrakhan as a fishing-station is unbounded and inexhaustible.

The delta of the Volga and the Caspian Sea lie twenty-five metres below the level of the Black Sea.

The city of Astrakhan, placed on the left bank of the

main channel of the delta, and, as I said, 150 versts above its anchorage, becomes like an island in the midst of a vast sea when the Volga comes down in its might with the thaw of the northern ice in late spring; and most of its lowest wards would be overwhelmed, were it not for the dikes that encompass it like a town in Holland.

The eight principal branches and the hundred minor channels and outlets of the delta, breaking up the land into a labyrinth of hundreds of islets, are then blended together in one watery surface, out of which only the crests of these islets emerge with isolated villages, with log-huts and long white-washed buildings, and high-domed churches, all dammed and diked up like the town itself—Tartar villages, Calmuck villages, Cossack villages, all or most of them fishers' homes and fishing establishments—a population of 20,000 to 30,000 souls being thus scattered on the crests of bare sand-hills and dunes; men of all race, colour, and faith, all employed in the same fishing pursuit; the Tartars and Calmucks usually as rank and file, the Russians and other Europeans as overseers, foremen, and skilled labourers.

For the Russians here represent the intelligence, while the conquered Asiatics, as well as the weaker sex without distinction, supply the brute force.

The women here, as all along the stations on the Volga, do most of the work, and only receive half-

pay—twenty Kopeks, or sixpence, where the men get forty.

Such is indeed the rule throughout Russia; women, however cherished as wives and daughters, are made to work as dumb cattle, and are corrected with the lash or stick as such. Wife-beating in Russia is or used to be claimed by man as a right; the bridegroom at a wedding in primitive districts still holding a whip over his bride's shoulders and tapping her gently with it, an emblem of the chastisement which he may have to resort to in their wedded intercourse, but which should, at all times as now, be only administered in love, and rather in sorrow than in anger. The lowering of the woman to the rank of a brute is so natural in man's estimation in Russia, that when in common parlance the population of a commune is alluded to in so many thousand or hundred "souls," only the number of men is meant—the existence of a female soul apparently not having been in olden times recognized or admitted.

The steam-launch which took us to see the fisheries enabled us to land at some of the Tartar and Calmuck villages, and especially at one called the Calmuck Bazaar; a cluster of tents and huts, among which rises the Pagoda or Buddhistic temple, with the dwelling of the priest, and a few young men his acolytes and attendants.

The Calmucks are by no means the handsomest or the cleanest among the races of mankind, and the priest

on whom we called here was no exception to the rule.

He sat crouching on the floor in his tent, as we stood in a group on the threshold, neither bidding nor forbidding us to enter, never looking up to see who was intruding on his solitude, and as loth to be disturbed in his "vespertine meditation," as his priestlings called it, or happy after-dinner doze, as we might have thought it, and at any rate as torpid as any ruminant in the Zoological Gardens after feeding time.

It was otherwise with his young acolytes, little priestlings in long, loose garments, of bright red and yellow colours, who after hinting that we had fallen in with one of the priest's uncommunicative moods, led us away to the village, taking upon themselves the task of doing the honours of the place, and flitted about us briskly, gabbling away in the Russian language, some of them just out of the Astrakhan gymnasium where they had received a Russian education.

These allowed us a free entrance into the Pagoda or temple, a rude edifice of three stories in the Chinese style, the interior consisting of an entrance-room and an inner room, this latter the Holy of Holies, all mean and tawdry, the walls hung with images, the tables covered with little carved idols, or with little cups with pinches of corn, fruit, or other offerings; idols or images all hideous—the materials of the cheapest, the art the most

primitive—the only object of value being a little doll of a god on a kind of main altar, an infant god, the head of which looked like gold, and, we were told, was massive.

On the floor, in the vestibule, were a huge gong and two trumpets longer and heavier than the famous mountain-horn of Uri, but very like it—and these constitute the orchestra accompanying the performance of Calmuck religious ceremonies. Of these the very questionable enjoyment was denied us. We paid our few roubles all the same, and were afterwards assured by men who had been privileged to see and hear them, that our money was well spent to be spared the infliction.

There was nothing in the village, at the doors, or even in the interior of the few cabins, or in the look or costume of their inmates, chiefly women and children, that in any way struck us as interesting or even curious. These people belong to the half-tamed category of the Asiatic races obeying Russian laws. They looked like a poverty-stricken lot, hard-working, and falling into the habits of the dominant people as rapidly as their apparently sluggish intelligence and the difference of language and creed would allow them.

But among their nomadic and, nominally at least, independent brethren, there must be wealthier classes; for as we came down the Volga, we had the good fortune at Saratoff to take up two young ladies who, it was

whispered to us by the captain of the steamer, were "Calmuck princesses."

One of these, we were told, was married to a Calmuck lord or prince who owned 10,000 "tents" or families of slaves, for the manumission of each of which, at the emancipation, he received as compensation a ransom of 7 roubles, or altogether a sum of 70,000 roubles, with which, by paying wages to the freed men, he still managed to draw a princely revenue from his flocks.

The two damsels came on board in princely attire, wearing high-crowned gold-embroidered caps, shaped somewhat like the *toque* of a French judge at the Supreme Court; black silk dresses with scarlet silk sleeves, also richly embroidered with gold; high-heeled *bottines*, and a profusion of jewellery about their necks and hands.

They had their governess with them, a German, and a goodly retinue of both sexes, and strutted about the deck, looking very much as if they wondered how, they being on board, anybody else could have any business to be there too.

With all their finery, however, and their stately airs, they reminded me of the Spanish proverb: "*La mona aun que se vista de seda, mona se queda.*"*

They may have been choice beauties among their

* "An ape, though she may robe herself in silk, will still be nothing but an ape."

tribes; but I know not what an European would have thought of their personal appearance. The taller and older and prouder of the two was a full-blown 'Venus' of the pure Mongol type, with a full-moon yellow face, small pig's eyes, a low forehead, puffed-up cheeks, a flat, thick nose, and a heavy, square, ungainly—though tall and portly—figure, and with nothing to boast of save a truly magnificent head of hair, which, gathered in two massive tresses, German fashion, came down to the small of her back.

The younger one, also a married woman, though barely in her teens, was a fac-simile of her more solid sister in every respect except her size; for she was rather thin and not inelegant, and showed to advantage by the contrast, as a playful kitten by the side of a demure, overgrown tabby.

CHAPTER XIII.

ASTRAKHAN TO VLADIKAVKAS.

Choice of Routes—Down the Volga—The Nine Feet Station—The Caspian Sea — Scenes at Sea — Morning Toilets — Morning Prayers—Passengers to Baku—Petrofsk—Lions in the Path—Disappointments—A Tarantass and a Travelling Carriage—On the Road — Scenery — The Mountains — The Steppe — The People— —Tumuli—Alarm of the Country—Precautions of the Government—Russian High Functionaries on their Travels—Safety of the Road.

FROM Astrakhan, the queen of the steppe, to Tiflis, the queen of the Caucasus, we had a choice of routes.

Tourists from England or from any part of Western Europe may easily visit the great mountain-chain on which Prometheus was bound, by crossing the Black Sea from Constantinople or from Odessa, and landing at Poti, where the Russians have constructed a railway to Tiflis, once the capital of Georgia, now the residence of the Governor-General of the whole Caucasian region.

A traveller from the north, bound to the same goal, can take the train at Moscow, and come down by rail, *viâ* Rostov, on the Don, all the way to Vladikavkas, a

distance of 1803 versts; and about 200 additional versts, by post, over a good military road, and across the main Caucasian chain, will bring him from Vladikavkas to Tiflis.

But we had descended the Volga, and were now near its mouth. We were out of the direct track, and our choice was limited.

Had we stopped at Tzaritzin, 380 versts above Astrakhan, we might there have taken the train to Kalatch on the Don; from Kalatch a steam-boat would have conveyed us down that river to its mouth at Rostov, whence the railway would have enabled us to reach Vladikavkas, and the post Tiflis. But we were at Astrakhan, and from there the alternative (for any one like myself objecting to a sea-voyage) lay between going back to Tzaritzin (a course to which I have an even greater repugnance), and crossing the steppe by the track along shore to the river Kuma, and further across the Kuma, to the river Terek, at Kizliar, where we would find a post-road to Vladikavkas, a journey of six or seven hundred miles through a country over which no one could tell us how we should travel, and across streams no one could tell us how we could ford or ferry over,—a thing in short not to be thought of.

Neither of these routes could suit, and there remained nothing but the sea-voyage. We had to go down the Volga to the Nine Feet Station below Astrakhan,

embark there on the Caspian Sea, and cross over either to Baku, whence we could go by post round the mountain-chain at its southern extremity as far as Tiflis; or land at Petrofsk, and travel along the chain to Vladikavkas and the good military road across the chain to Tiflis.

We gave our preference to the last-named route.

We left Astrakhan at ten in the evening on board a heavy barge belonging to the Caucasus and Mercury steam-navigation company, towed by a tug down stream at the rate of five or six miles an hour.

We were all that afternoon and night, and part of the following day, descending the main channel of the Volga, and it was past noon before we reached the Nine Feet Station, for so they call the roadstead above which vessels of more than nine feet draught dare not venture.

All sight of land, of the 70 larger islands of the Delta, and even of the minor islets, and of the lowest sand-banks, had been lost for several hours, and we were here in the open sea, though scarcely beyond the boundary that the Creator has elsewhere fixed between land and water. For the Station which, if I can allow myself an apparent Irishism, is a moveable one, has to be pushed forward almost day by day as the sands of the Volga silt up far beyond the choked-up lands of the Delta, encroaching with a steady inroad on the depths of the waves; the steppe everywhere widening as the

sea dwindles, and suggesting the thought that the whole region that is now steppe must in remote ages have been sea, and that whatever is now sea must in time become steppe.

Indeed, it seems not impossible to calculate how many years or centuries it may take for the sands of the Volga, aided by those of the Ural and the Emba on the eastern, and of the Kuma, the Terek, and the Kur, or Kura, with its tributary the Aras, on the western shore, to fill up the land-locked Caspian, though its extreme depth, according to the Gazetteers, is 600 feet, and the area covered by it probably exceeds 180,000 square miles, a surface as large as that of Spain.

At the Nine Feet Station we were transhipped on board the 'Armyanin,' a wretched old steamer, of which nothing could be praised but the gallant captain,—a miserable boat at all times, but now crowded with a mob of Persians, Armenians, Jews, Tartars, and other unwashed tribes of mankind, whom we had left behind at the Nijni Novgorod fair, flattering ourselves that we were rid of them for ever; but whom our lengthened stay at Astrakhan had enabled to overtake us on our southern progress.

We were tossed about on the chopping seas of the Caspian for the whole of that night and the following day.

In the morning I was up at sunrise, and little as

I liked the Asiatics and their "hundred thousand stanches," I stood for more than an hour on the quarter-deck reserved for first cabin-passengers, and amused myself by watching the *reveille* and morning toilet of my fellow-travellers, the steerage passengers; men, women, and children, of many nations, of various colours, creeds, and tongues, who had been all night lying *pêle-mêle*, and packed together like herrings on the over-crowded deck.

It was curious to see—from a distance—the different, yet all primitive methods followed by the motley crowd, as they exchanged their simple night costume for the picturesque finery of their morning attire.

The shapeless bundles of blankets and cloaks, of furs and cloth wrappers, under which hundreds of human beings had lain on their pillows or bolsters, or on the bare deck, an almost undistinguishable mass like the turf that lies "in many a mouldering heap" in a country churchyard, began to heave here and there; and heads and arms, and whole figures in a sitting or kneeling posture, emerged, slowly and silently at first, and still drowsily, as one might imagine the "rude forefathers of the hamlet" to rise at the call of the final day.

But they shook themselves one by one, and there soon was yawning, and stretching of limbs, and laughing, and calling upon one another, and jesting,

and that "chaffing" which is of all countries and climates.

By-and-by most of them went to work; the Russians and other Franks took off their caps, and ran either their pocket-combs or their ten fingers into their hair for a hearty scratch. The Moslems simply turned their fezzes and fur-turbans or mitres twice or three times round their shaven heads, but doffed their caftans and gaberdines, and held them over the bulwarks, shaking them over the waves, to rid themselves as they could of the troublesome guests which they had most unwillingly harboured there in the night. They then sat on their crossed legs in the Oriental fashion, and stroked their long beards, handing over to one another in tiny tea-cups the mere dribblets of water in which they dipped their fingers, and gave their eyes, one after the other, a moistening and refreshing rub.

The women had a far more troublesome and complicated task before them; for they had children, some of them babies at the breast, or on and round their knees, and most of them belonged to that Moslem race whose faces shun the light of men's eyes as jealously as the Queen of Spain hides her legs.

The necessity of reconciling the common duties of maternity with the special injunctions of the many-wived Prophet very sorely distressed these poor daughters of Islam, who had to nurse, wash, comb,

chide, and occasionally slap, their small fry, all the while they vainly tried to catch in the air and tie under their chin the corners of their perverse, erratic yashmak or shawl, which was for ever fluttering in the fresh morning breeze: their embarrassment being aggravated by the mock politeness of sailors, steward's waiters, and other Giaours, who under pretence of aiding to cover, conspired to expose the forbidden charms of those angry faces,—profane Giaours heedless of the curses of the females, and of the scowls of the older members of the male Mahometan community, and encouraged all the time by the laugh of its younger generation, who were ready enough to forgive the sacrilege in their enjoyment of the fun.

All this lively and varied scene was being acted before me as in a dumb show; for the wind was high and the sea boisterous, and of those several hundred gabbling voices little more than a confused hum and hubbub reached me.

Presently, a more sober mood seemed to pervade the motley company.

The time of day, and the example of a few Popes, Mollahs, and Rabbis, who began to be revealed by their costume, reminded them of the "Zeus, Jehovah, Allah, God," whom all of them professed to acknowledge under His different names. Old and young, without waiting for a signal, without gathering in groups, almost simul-

taneously fell to their devotions ; Cossacks and other Russians to their usual rapid succession of jerking bows and signs of the cross ; Turks and Persians, kneeling on their spread carpets, and with their prayer-beads between their fingers, going through their repeated prostrations.

A rivalry of zeal and earnestness sprang up among the votaries of these different and so obstinately hostile creeds. Each of them, while minding his own duty, and conscious of the purity of his own faith, cast a look askance at his neighbours, contemplating with wonder, and yet not without charity, rites and practices at variance with his own ; all apparently coming to the silent conclusion that "*Dieu connaît ceux qui sont à lui,*" and that even the most grovelling superstition is good enough for those poor "dogs" who without that would be altogether destitute of religion.

It struck me also as singular, however natural, that all these worshippers, whatever denomination they belonged to, instinctively, it may be, and unconsciously, turned towards the East, where the sun had just risen, as if they felt that to whomsoever their muttered prayer might be directed, the implied praise and thanksgiving of their hearts must rise to the Creator whose marvellous works have equal rights to the gratitude of all His creatures.

Heaven and earth were at that moment a temple, and all of us were sun-worshippers—surely the most

pardonable of all idolatries. This sacred debt being paid, our fellow-passengers were reminded of what they owed to themselves: families and friends sat down together on the bare deck, and proceeded to open their wallets and consider what was left of the remnants of their supper to furnish forth their morning meal: the steward went bustling round; hot loaves came up from the oven; the samovars, public and private, began to steam; the tea-cups, not rinsed, were wiped with pocket-handkerchiefs; egg-shells were broken; drams of *wodka* were poured out; cigarettes were lighted; and the same deck that was half-an-hour before a house of prayer was turned at once into a banquetting-hall.

The wind abated, meanwhile, and the sea rapidly subsided. Our lady passengers who had been lying all night as dead and buried in their cabins, began to revive, one by one, and our breakfast also was ready in the saloon below.

Amongst others I saw again a lively and amiable Dowager Princess from St. Petersburg, with whom I had struck up an acquaintance over-night, and who sat up with me to a late hour, when the deck had been cleared by stress of weather of all the rest of her sex.

The daughter of this Princess had recently contracted marriage with a gentleman of good family, but, as far as I could understand, of reduced means, who was endeavouring to retrieve his fortune by employing himself as

a Civil Engineer and Director of some profitable naphtha pits at Baku. The old lady, with this married daughter, and a whole bevy of other daughters still unmarried, all sprightly and sociable, highly accomplished and very attractive, was bound to Baku, there to join her son-in-law, who had a home ready for them.

We became fast friends with the Dowager and with the younger ladies, who all showed great anxiety that I should change my intended route, and instead of landing at Petrofsk, should prolong my voyage for thirty hours and go with them as far as Baku, reaching thus Tiflis by the southern road; the ladies declaring that none but a barbarian would lose so good an opportunity of seeing the wonders of Baku, its petroleum wells, its naphtha lakes and springs, some of them "spouting up in the air as high as the Geysers of Iceland," and one of which, as I might learn from the St. Petersburg papers, had been for several days and was still on fire, baffling the efforts of hundreds of men to put it out, and exhibiting by night so wondrous a spectacle as would put my reminiscences of Vesuvius, Stromboli, and Etna all to the blush.

The temptation was strong, but I resisted it manfully, and for a variety of reasons. In the first place, the change of plan would have involved loss of time; in the second place, I should have lost a chance of travelling across the main chain of the Caucasus where I

expected to behold grand Alpine scenery ; but, above all things, I am habitually reluctant to swerve from the course I have traced before me ; and the captain, who possibly liked to monopolize the ladies' company, warned me that there was foul weather ahead, and that I should have two more nights far worse than the one I had already passed in his "old, slow, and rickety" boat—this being the first time I heard a skipper applying such disparaging epithets to his vessel, as long, at least, as he is in command. So I abided by my resolution to land at Petrofsk.

The day was already considerably advanced when we neared the shore and descried the foremost spurs of the Daghestan mountains, which, projecting far out of the line of the Caucasian chain, trend in declining lines round the Bay of Petrofsk.

Petrofsk, a little modern town near the site of Old Tarku and its fort Burnaya, has little to recommend it besides the advantage of its maritime situation, which has lately been improved by a prolongation of its mole and breakwater.

It was nearly four in the afternoon when we landed ; but, though hindrances and difficulties awaited me on shore, I abided by my determination to set out for my further journey that same evening.

Both my good friends at Astrakhan, and others, had told me that I should not think of crossing from

Petrofsk to Tiflis without a tarantass, and one of them, the Dalmatian, had offered either to lend or give up one he owned, and which had already done him good service. But my other friend, the governor, had telegraphed to Petrofsk, and had been answered that a tarantass could easily be found on the spot.

On the strength of this information I thanked my Dalmatian friend, whose conveyance would have somewhat embarrassed me in the barge and on board the "old, slow, and rickety" steamer; and the bird in the hand was unwisely left behind in the vain confidence that we had made sure of the bird in the bush.

At Petrofsk, the officer in command of the police, to whom the friendly governor of Astrakhan had recommended me, received us at the landing-place, and conveyed us in his carriage to the hotel where he himself had his quarters. But, on my urging the necessity I was in of proceeding further that very evening, he gave me the unwelcome information that "no tarantass could be had at Petrofsk for love or money."

The cause of the contretemps was this:—The governor of Astrakhan, or rather the governor's aide-de-camp, in transmitting his chief's telegram had only bespoken a conveyance, and a vehicle of some sort, and a very good one, was ready for us; but it was not a *tarantass*, and could never have carried us all the way to Tiflis or even to Vladikavkas.

I am not sure that all readers are aware of the difference between a *tarantass* and an ordinary travelling-carriage.

The tarantass is a roomy, heavy vehicle, with a hood and apron, splash-board and steps, somewhat like a large phaeton, but without seats, and in which by day you sit on your boxes, bags, pillows, and other luggage, according to your ideas of comfort; but in which, by night, all impediments being removed and your pillows and blankets properly arranged, you can lie at full length, in the event of finding no other or no better sleeping accommodation.

But the important particular of the tarantass is that it stands, not on springs like a Christian carriage, but on about a score of long poles, somewhat elastic, laid out side by side like a raft over the axletrees, and between the wheels.

The tarantass is thus a hybrid vehicle, a cross between a coach and a cart, consisting of the shell of a carriage on the gear of a common Russian country cart. The tossing and jolting is very nearly the same as in the cart, but the comforts inside are those of a *coupé-lit*.

But a further advantage of the tarantass is, that it is safer against all accidents on the road than any vehicle on springs; indeed the only safe conveyance on the generality of Russian roads, and especially on the track across the steppe into which we were about to enter;

for if a carriage-spring breaks you may have to go forty or fifty miles before you find a blacksmith to repair it ; if you only break a pole, " you have only," as a traveller says, " to cut down a young pine, and smooth off the leaves and twigs, and there you have another pole."

The tarantass was, therefore, for us a *sine quâ non*, and we deliberated whether we should telegraph to Astrakhan for my good Dalmatian's vehicle, or whether we should ourselves go back to the Volga and give up the Caucasus.

Fortunately, it was suggested as probable that we should find what we wanted at Shura, the capital of Daghestan, a town about 47 versts inland, which we might reach by a good macadamised road and by the good travelling-carriage that a Petrofsk isvoshtchik had ready for us.

Although there was only a probability and no certainty of going farther than Shura, we resolved on making the attempt, and bade the isvoshtchik be in readiness by the time we had eaten a hasty dinner.

The commander of the police, who never left us during all these anxious deliberations, recommended us to take with us a Tartar, for whose bravery and faithfulness he made himself answerable, and who was to act in the double capacity of an escort and a courier.

There had been, he said, a shocking case of murder that very day ; three shots had been fired at a Russian

officer on the highway; one on himself, one on 'his driver, and the third on one of his horses, and all with deadly effect; and it was the deed of some miscreants lurking behind the bush.

“But all this,” he added (he was speaking German), —“all this *thut nichts*, is no matter.”

We winced a little at this, as we thought that, however little it might matter to him, who stopped where he was, it might somewhat concern us who were soon to be on the road by daylight and after dusk. But we thanked him all the same for his advice, and accepted it; so that the Tartar, Yuri, as he was called, with his long, old-fashioned flint horse-pistol, and long, ivory-handled yataghan in his belt, was accommodated with the third place in our conveyance throughout the journey. We left Petrofsk on the last hour of that long, lingering summer day.

Our way lay through a defile of well-wooded mountains, the beauty of the scenery gaining upon us as the twilight slowly faded, and the full moon shed its witchery over it when we reached the summit of the Pass, and drove down the valley to Shura.

Shura, or Temir-Khan-Shura, where we arrived at midnight, a town of about 6000 inhabitants, and the residence of the governor of Daghestan, is a cluster of Greek, Armenian, and other Christian churches, and a few Tartar mosques, all rising out of a vast area of public

and private houses and gardens, with a few handsome suburban villas—a fresh and green town, not over lively.

Here, however, we were at the end of our doubts and misgivings. For at a large livery-stable we found a solitary tarantass, for which, as may be expected, we had to pay whatever we were asked. We produced our *podorojna* or *feuille de route*, a State document with which the commander of the police at Petrofsk had provided us, and which empowered us to hire post-horses; and after wasting the whole morning in needful but tiresome preparations, we set out at noon on our second day's journey.

Our course, which had been from east to west as far as Shura, changed from south to north all the way to Chir Yurt, 49 versts off, where we came to our second halt for the night. The mountains had been about us all the way, but always declining, and sinking at last to mere isolated hillocks dotting here and there the widening plain.

From Chir Yurt, on the third day, we made an early start; we forded the river Sulack, a mountain torrent in a narrow gorge, and clambered round a hill commanding the Pass, where we were shown several towers on the steep, once the advanced posts of the Circassian prophet-chief-tain ShamyI, who here and in the fastnesses of Ghunib, farther to the south, stood up for a heroic but

unequal and eventually unavailing struggle against all the forces of the Russian Empire (1831—1859).

On issuing from the gorge, as we resumed our westward course, we saw before us the vast extent of the steppe, across which we had to wend our way very nearly for the best part of two days. We travelled from Chir Yurt to Grosnaya, 109 versts, that same day, and 102 on the morrow, from Grosnaya to our journey's end at Vladikavkas.

The steppe, as every reader knows, is a sandy desert, once the bed of the sea, with traces of the old salt-water in its broad undulations—a sea of sand, covered at this time of the year with a sunburnt scrubby brushwood, screening under its foliage a rich though coarse grass, the pasture on which numberless flocks and herds find their subsistence.

On our right, looking north, there was nothing but the dead level between us and Moscow, or indeed all the way to Archangel and the Polar Sea, save when here and there the sandy ribs of the Sunsh-Aruk, swelling like long billows, partially obstructed the view.

On our left we had the great chain of the Caucasus, its first blue ridge often near at hand, and distinctly perceptible, but jealously hiding the higher regions with their glaciers and perpetual snows.

The sky was overcast, as it often is on the steppe and the surrounding lands, and heavy clouds of blinding

dust rose against us at every gust of wind. There was sameness and dreariness, though not without grandeur, in the landscape, and the monotony was only relieved at great intervals by the post-houses, the villages and hamlets, wherever a scanty watercourse enabled the people to coax up a few green patches of fields and meadows, a thin row of poplars or willows, something like an oasis of verdure in a region where the sun of six summer months seemed to have sucked up every drop of the earth's heart-blood. In the spring, one may fancy, even the steppe must know something of the sweet alternative of smiles and tears of the earth's bridal day; but even in the autumn the land cannot seem so blank and unprofitable to the cattle as it does to us; for at every stage on our progress we met immense herds and flocks—herds of oxen and buffaloes, troops of horses, flocks of sheep, and we found at every cottage flocks of turkeys and geese.

The buffalo, which we had not seen before in Russia, makes its appearance in Daghestan, and the other provinces north of the Caucasus, but is equally at home on both sides of the chain, where it is valued considerably above the ox, and fetches nearly double the price. The Tartar herdsmen show a great preference for the buffalo, not only on account of its enormous strength, but also because they think the female gives milk of a more substantial quality.

Equally familiar is here everywhere the sight of the camel or dromedary, and not only on the steppe—for we saw it as we came down the Volga, at Samara, and the other stations on the left bank of the river, all of which may be regarded as the gates of Asia.

At Grosnaya, a pleasant little town, with a clean German inn, where we put up for the third night, we met the first tumuli or earth-mounds which have so much interest for Russian and other European archæologists, and which are equally to be seen dotting the landscape, not only near the town but all over the steppe, all the way to Vladikavkas.

That these mounds are not natural elevations but were raised by the hand of man is a fact not to be doubted by any one who has ever seen them; and it is also more than probable that they were raised by men of some primitive nomadic race (the Scythians, as some think, a nation like the Pelasgians, on whose actual existence in remote ages every scholar is ready to swear, but of whose real name, of the date of their appearing on, or vanishing from, the world's stage, and of the boundaries of whose habitation, the most learned gentlemen know as little as I do) desirous to perpetuate the memory of some chieftain buried underneath, to whom, in the absence of stone and other material fit for the building of walls, or for the heaping up of cairns, the earth supplied the means of rearing monuments which

will outlast whatever the Greeks and Romans ever constructed out of bronze or marble.

A few of these mounds have been dug open to some depth in the interests of science ; but by far the greatest number look as if they were intact, and as they have stood for several thousand years.

Monuments of the same description are to be seen in the provinces of Kherson, Kharkoff, and other parts of Southern Russia, as well as in some districts in Siberia.

We met with no accident, and even with no appearance of danger, during our progress, though the faithful Yuri, our Tartar, with that zeal by which most guides endeavour to enhance their importance by conjuring up bug-bears, ran after me whenever I sallied forth for a stroll in advance of our conveyance, while horses were changed, admonishing me with great earnestness, and entreating me, "as I valued my life," not to venture beyond reach of his protecting pistol. But the evidence that the country was in a state of alarm, and the Government bent on awing it by a great display of force, met us at every step—in the sentries that were out on duty at every post ; in the squad of Cossacks standing by their picketed horses at every cross-road ; but especially in the precautions public functionaries of high rank evidently took for their own protection.

On the second day of our journey, before we reached

Chir-Yurt, we met Prince Tchavtchavdze, a Georgian, lieutenant-governor of the province of Ielisivetpol, with his Princess, travelling with two post-carriages, and not only escorted by outriders armed to the teeth, but also by men on the coach-boxes and back-seats, with guns in their hands, held up and pointed outwards in every direction, as if ready for an attack on all sides.

And on the third day, between Chir-Yurt and Grosnaya, at the Istissu Station, near the very spot where the murder of the Russian officer we had heard of at Petrofsk had been perpetrated, we found the whole neighbourhood assembled, and were ordered by the station-master to proceed at once with our jaded horses to the next stage, for he could not allow us to obstruct the ground for one moment to change or bait our team, as the whole country was awaiting the Governor of Vladikavkas, who would be there instantly.

And, indeed, we had hardly gone two versts when we met the great man, also with a large retinue, preceded, flanked on both sides, and supported by at least thirty Cossacks, although the road and all approaches to the station were thronged with the police and with soldiery of all arms.

It was evidently an unquiet and dangerous neighbourhood we had ventured into, and nothing could be more forbidding than the savage look of the whole Tartar population, all of whom, not excepting even lads

of ten or twelve years of age, had pistols and daggers at their belts, the very beggar in tatters often making a display of silver-mounted scimitar, or yataghan, and commonly of both.

That deeds of blood should be frequent among a bloody-minded people, with their hands perpetually caressing the hilts of such murderous instruments, can be no matter of wonder; and we were not surprised to hear at Grosnaya, our third halting-place, that, a few days before our arrival, a Russian army doctor, who was known to be stone deaf, had his door battered in by some ruffians, who cut his throat as he lay asleep in his bed. The motive of this murder, as well as that of the officer shot down on the high road, remained in each case a mystery, as in neither case was the atrocious crime attended by robbery, not one rouble's worth of the murdered men's property having been touched. There seemed to be no doubt that the assassins had been prompted by mere blood-thirstiness, and possibly by the rancour of a savage people against their rulers; for we were crossing a region that was in arms against Russia at the time of the Crimean war and after its close, and, as I said, we had seen everywhere localities made famous by the exploits of that Shamyl who stirred up these men of the mountain and the steppe to a rebellion, which Russia was hardly able to overcome in a score of years.

For obscure and inoffensive travellers like ourselves no serious danger need be apprehended. We heard at Vladikavkas that a diligence had been stopped and rifled by bandits near that place and on the road to Tiflis; but we found nowhere a confirmation of that report.

In the afternoon of the fourth day after leaving Petrofsk we arrived at Vladikavkas.

CHAPTER XIV.

VLADIKAVKAS TO TIFLIS.

Across the Caucasus—Vladikavkas—The Caucasian Gates—A Contretemps and a *Quid pro quo*—Fellow-Travellers—An Afternoon Walk—A Morning Ride—The Kazbek—Alpine and Caucasian Scenery—A Russian Professor—Russian Caution—Russian Posts—Russian Administration—Tiflis by Night.

AT Vladikavkas we were waiting for fine weather.

The town lies at the foot of the main Caucasian chain, at the opening of the valley of the Terek, along which lies the high road to Tiflis. There is nothing very formidable about the journey at the present season, though in winter and early spring the mountain is made impassable by storm and avalanche, and postal communication suffers frequent interruption for several weeks.

But fair weather was desirable for us to insure us an unclouded view of the higher region, and hitherto the heavens had held out no very favourable prospect of this.

Vladikavkas is not a bad place, for a Russian town. It has a population of 30,000 inhabitants, mostly Cossacks and Armenians, with a motley crowd of all Asiatic tribes; and, as it lies at the terminus of all Russian railways, as well as on the only carriage-road between Trans, and Cis-Caucasia, it may confidently look forward to a brilliant future.

But the choice of its site was not fortunate. It lies too low and too close to the mountains to enjoy as free and broad a view of the chain as Turin or Berne has of the Alpine regions, and the valley of the Terek on which it is built is not sufficiently open to let the beholder's eye into the heart of the mountain and afford an extensive panorama of its gradual ascent. Even when the clouds cleared and the weather mended, all we could see beyond the dark outer ridge which was stretched before us like a stage curtain, were the snow-capped points of the Kazbek and of two or three other mountains of minor note; only the points. There were nowhere those great gaps which break the main crest of the Graian and Pennine Alps into a maze of minor ridges rising upon one another and dove-tailed into one another, forming those broad amphitheatres which charm us as seen from most of the Piedmontese and Lombard cities.

However, the weather mended. A *tarantass* and post-horses were procured, and we set out at noon,

making sure that the six or seven hours that remained of daylight would enable us to travel easily over the 44 versts that divided us from the Kazbek station ; as we were anxious to reach that spot in time to see the sun setting behind the blushing snow-crest of the giant mountain of that name.

We failed in our intent, owing to an egregious piece of stupidity sufficiently ludicrous to deserve particular mention.

We had repeated occasions to complain of the Russian postal service. The station-masters did not treat us with incivility, but certainly not with any great ceremony, and the postilions, whose only usual obeisance consists in touching their caps to the travellers at the end of the stage, when they hold out their hand for their *trinkgeld*, omitted even that poor compliment when, as in our case, there was a courier to settle accounts with them, the traveller then being of no more consequence to the driver than mere lumber.

But the main grievance against the Russian posts is the deficiency of horses, which very frequently detains the travellers at the various stages for hours, and in some instances for half days and whole nights. We had taken out our *podorojna* at Vladikavkas and had telegraphed both for horses along the road, and for hotel accommodation at Tiflis. We flattered ourselves that we were *en règle*, and that all would be right. But we

reckoned without our station-masters as well as without our landlords.

We had hardly alighted at the first station, Balta, when we were met with the usual annoying intimation, "No horses."

That answer, however, was addressed to my interpreter, who spoke to the ostler in Russian; but, on hearing English spoken between me and my interpreter, an immediate change came over the scene; the station-master became instantly obsequious, saying: "Yes, yes! There are horses. Quick! put the horses to! lose no time!"

We thus proceeded in gallant style to the second station, Lars. Here, also, the old story:

"No horses."

"How so? Did we not telegraph?"

"You did, and other travellers did. But all our teams are on the road. We expect them back, several of them, from Kazbek. You shall have the second."

"Why not the first?"

"Because that is destined for two Professors on their way to the Archæological meeting at Tiflis, whose telegram preceded yours."

As this was said, the travelling-carriage with the two Professors actually drove up, and they also were informed that they had to wait, their meagre consolation being that we would be made to wait even longer.

It was an awkward predicament. We walked round the station to the stable, followed by the ostler. There, to be sure, were four capital horses, ready-harnessed and bridled, trifling with their hay.

“Why, what horses are these?”

“These are for the English General.” They had been bespoken *by authority*, and he was expected every minute. “Other travellers must have patience.”

Unfortunately my patience is of the shortest. After storming vainly for a moment or two, I turned to the interpreter, saying that, as we were only fifteen versts from the Kazbek station, we should walk, trusting our legs to achieve what could otherwise no longer be accomplished by the aid of four-footed brutes.

We set out, accordingly, and walked nine versts up a steep road, from a height of 3682 to 5740 feet. We stepped out manfully, keeping up our race with the sun, and venting our vexation on the head of this absurd Englishman, who claimed in a foreign country a privilege which no one would allow him in his own, and to which scarcely any rank or station should anywhere entitle even a native—the rule in civilized countries being that all travellers paying their money should have equal right to the post-horses on the principle “first come, first served.” For the General’s telegram, we were told, had come in one hour later than ours.

Our rage grew as we advanced and time passed, and

we perceived that Kazbek could not be reached till after sun-down, and that meanwhile no jingle of post-chaise bells announced the coming of this precious English General who, we had been made to believe, was in such desperate hurry.

An hour elapsed: the Professors overtook us and passed us. Another hour, and another chaise came up at last, but it was not the General's; it was our own tarantass, which, after two hours' waiting, had finally been sent after us, and in which we accomplished the few remaining versts to Kazbek.

It was dark when we reached the post-house, and, as a matter of course, the view of the mountain snow was lost for this once; and we sat down to dinner or supper in by no means the best of moods. The waiters, however, were officiously civil.

“What time do you expect the General?” I asked.

“The General?”

“Yes. Were not horses telegraphed for an English General?”

“Sure enough,” answered the man, “and that is yourself. We received the Préfet's telegram three hours ago, and the horses are at your service.”

This explained all. The Préfet of Vladikavkas, a most amiable gentleman of our acquaintance, had carried his courtesy so far as, unknown to us, to telegraph for horses on our behalf, all along the line, mentioning no

names, but only announcing the instant arrival of a "distinguished" Englishman—a compliment perfectly gratuitous on his part, but which did all the mischief; for the postmaster, a thorough Russian, understood that a man to whom that epithet was attached must at least be a "General."

Thus the horses to which my money entitled me were kept from me and denied to me because they were destined for me, and I had to walk, or to wait and fret, which was worse; but the *contretemps* and *qui pro quo* were so funny that all my wrath was turned to laughter. I revoked all the curses which, in this case, would certainly, "like chickens, have come home to roost," and I dined with the best appetite, proud of the new title with which I had been dubbed, and only wishing that the Russians would serve their post with less partiality, and not allow either their fellow-subjects or strangers to be sat upon by the "Generals."

The Professors, however, with whom we made friends at table, and who laughed with us at the adventure, reminded us that in Russia a General is not necessarily recognized by his martial air, as all public servants, civil or military, are distinguished by the same titles as the officers of the army, as they advance in the service, so that one of our two gentlemen, an old St. Petersburg Professor, had himself already attained the General's rank.

We had thus gone our first stage on the Terek Pass across the Caucasian chain.

The Terek Pass reaches a height of 7977 feet, and consequently about 2000 feet above the St. Gothard, the Simplon, and the other Alpine carriage roads, the Stelvio excepted. Its length is $210\frac{1}{4}$ versts, and we got over its 12 stages in two days and a half, though a traveller in a greater hurry, with a better command of post-horses, and going day and night, could easily accomplish the whole distance in 24 hours.

The road is well laid out, and the valleys were sufficiently wide and open to enable the engineer to avoid all straight, steep ascent, so that the hardy post-nags can go up at an almost uninterrupted trot the whole way.

On leaving Vladikavkas the road almost immediately winds round a bluff projecting into the valley, and strikes across a narrow defile—the Vale of Duriel—known to the ancients as the “Caucasian Gates,” along a succession of huge limestone and slate rocks clad with luxuriant verdure, through which the Terek tears down in mad leaps, the mountain-sides here and there pressing so close upon the valley as to leave barely room for more than the torrent and the high-road. The beauty of this entrance can bear comparison with the most renowned gorges of the Swiss or Italian Alpine Passes, though the mountain-walls on either side have not the perpendicular

steepness of the *Via Mala* on the Splugen, to which they have been compared, nor are there anywhere such abysses as those of the Devil's Bridge and the Urner Loch at the St. Gothard.

At Kazbek we stayed for the night, and were up early in the morning of the second day, and went up to the so-called Monastery—an old church or chapel on a hill, about 1500 feet above the high-road.

We found the nags in the yard; three for us, for we required a mounted guide, and two for our friends and fellow-travellers, the Professors. One of these latter, the younger one, however, was no rider, and declared that he "would rather walk." Then he was afraid the ascent would tire him, and ended by bidding us good-bye and going back to bed. The older one, though aged, and a nervous rider, kept up with us and proved a most agreeable companion.

It dawned as we climbed, and the sun had not yet risen, when after one and a half hours' ride we reached the Monastery. The fatigue was not great, and it was amply repaid.

From a mound near the Monastery we looked into the very heart of the upper mountain region, as from the top of the Faulhorn Alpine tourists behold the panorama of the Bernese Oberland. The view was certainly magnificent, and the Kazbek, with its main pinnacle rising 16,546 feet above the sea-level (about the height of

Mont Blanc), a sharp pyramid, not unlike the Matterhorn, or Mount Cervin, as seen from the Italian side, must in its own time of the year come up to the most sublime ideal of high mountain scenery. But the season in this hot climate was too far advanced, the glaciers had dwindled to the scantiest rivulets, the snow had slipped from the projecting masses, and the paths of the avalanches into which we gazed were dark, cavernous, and precipitous, but drained to the last drop. Kazbek is an isolated mountain; the multitudinous masses around it, though gigantic, are dwarfed beside it. Hardly any of them had snow except in the deepest clefts, and the landscape at our feet and in the valley was too bare and bleak to relieve by contrast the dreariness of the upper solitude. It is only in April or May, I should think, when the first touch of spring stirs the heart of the mountain and awakens the echo of the avalanche, that the sublime scenery of the Kazbek and the Caucasus must be striking and appalling. In September it all looks like an exhausted snow region, an exploded mountain world.

On our return from the Monastery we ordered our breakfast, and left Kazbek the same day towards noon.

From Kazbek we went up two stages to Kobi, 6500 feet, and "Krest," the spot where a cross marks the summit of the Pass, and the parting of the waters, at 7977 feet. From that spot the road takes a down-

ward leap to Gudaur and Mleti, a leap of 3016 feet, along which the engineer has worked his way by a maze of windings and turnings, not in sharp zig-zags, but in easy, broad curves, spreading over the mountainsides, whenever any projection afforded a coign of vantage, the road as one viewed it from on high looking like a loose white riband slipping down in a hundred folds and coils on the dark, rugged rocks, all done with a skill rivalling the great Alpine achievements on the slopes of Hospenthal or Airolo, Isella, or Lanslebourg.

At Mleti we put up the second night, and continued the descent along the valley of the Aragua to Dushet and further to Mtskheta, where that river ends in the Kur or Kura (ancient Cyrus), and hence along this latter river to Tiflis.

As we travelled downwards, the road for many miles was monotonous, traversing a wilderness of bare mountains, with scarcely a vestige of verdure, and with hardly anywhere a wide gap in the continuous ridge to afford relief by a peep into the adjoining glens and dells. There is not a single lake or waterfall on the whole route; the hamlets are few and far between; and, although old Georgian churches and monasteries, feudal towers and castles, and ruins here and there awaken the traveller's interest, they are not sufficient to dispel the sense of loneliness which

pervades the whole region, the same feeling one experiences when crossing the most savage tracks of the Gemmi and Grimsel passes.

We had travelled all the way from Kazbek to Mtskheta with the Professors, whose conveyance was a light and easy-going phaeton, preferable to our lumbering tarantass, and in which I had the additional advantage of the company of the elder gentleman, having made over his friend to my interpreter, a Russian of English extraction, and, as such, neither the one thing nor the other—a common-place, indolent, drowsy, gluttonous, and unprofitable fellow-traveller.

The old Professor, on the other hand, was a perfect treasure of an acquaintance; he knew everything and spoke every language, and talked charmingly on all subjects of interest, except one. Whenever the dialogue touched on topics in any manner approaching politics—home or foreign politics—he showed a marvellous address in turning the conversation, or if plyed with a direct question, he solved it by *verbum nescio*—an ignorance not altogether affected on his part; for Russians, and especially Russian scholars, think it prudent to stick to the “Nihil-de-Principe-parum-de-Deo” golden rule in private intercourse, and look upon matters belonging to Church and State, at home or abroad, as the “forbidden fruit in the Eden of science,” from which they keep altogether aloof to avoid temptation.

At Mtskheta, the last post-house before Tiflis, we had to part company, for the station could only supply one team of horses for the Professors, whose carriage came in first into the yard, and we had to wait at least four hours before our turn came.

If you ask a Russian station-master how it is he is so badly off for horses, his answer is that he can keep no more cattle than the rascally Postal Administration pays for. And if you ask the Official Administration they will tell you the post is so ill-served because the rogues of station-masters pocket for themselves all the money they receive for the purchase and maintenance of their teams. And both statements may be equally correct. And as it is in this, so it is also in all other Government departments. *Cosas de Russia.*

At the end of the four hours, as the station-master made no sign, and I, losing all patience, began to abuse him as a pick-pocket, the team was produced, and we were able to proceed on the last stage, though the rogue managed to palm me off with a lame horse, and, on a false pretence that all his postilions were absent, he gave the reins to a man covered with motley tatters, a very Autolycus, who had been all the time pestering us for alms, and with whom on the box I would no more have driven into Tiflis by day than Falstaff would have marched through Coventry with Shallow's squad of tattereddemalions.

By good fortune night fell upon us before we arrived, and as we neared the city, the thousand lights burning along the cliffs and on the hills on which its scattered wards and suburbs are placed, made at a distance so marvellous a show as to give us the impression that we were nearing a fairy place—the vision being such as one would have expected from a town as large as Paris, and as picturesque as Edinburgh.

CHAPTER XV.

TIFLIS.

The Caucasus—The Caucasian Region—Its Capital—The Site—Old and New Tiflis—Character of the People—North of the Chain—South of the Chain—Russian Rule—Magistrates and Police—Feelings of the People—Nationality—Religion—Taxes—Soil and Climate—Produce—Means of Communication—Railways in Prospect—Scarcity in the Midst of Plenty—Want of Fuel—Naphtha.

THE main chain of the Caucasus crosses obliquely from east-north-east to west-south-west the great isthmus which lies between the Black Sea and the Caspian, separating Europe from Asia.

The chain extends on a line of more than one thousand miles from the neighbourhood of Anapa, at the entrance of the Sea of Azof, almost in a straight line to Baku and the peninsula of Apscheron jutting out into the Caspian.

The crest averages a height of about 11,000 feet, and several of its peaks rival the loftiness of the Kazbek; one of them, the Elbruz, overtops it, rising above 17,000 feet.

The valleys on both sides are steep and narrow ; and besides the Terek Pass, which we had just crossed, there are hardly any other very practicable high-ways, one of the most frequented being the bridle-path from Derbent to Tiflis.

The Kur, the main river of the region, on the southern side, coming from its sources near Mount Ararat, and flowing parallel to the chain from west to east, waters a plain which separates the main chain itself, or "Great Caucasus," from another cluster of mountains, constituting the "Minor Caucasus," or the Highlands of Armenia, on one of the southernmost spurs of which tower the twin isolated pyramidal points of the "Great and Little Ararat," the hallowed mountains the name of which first occurs in Holy Writ.

The whole of this Circassian region consists of the old territories of Daghestan and Circassia, north of the main chain, and of the whole kingdom of Georgia on the south, to which Russia added at various epochs the Armenian districts of Erivan, Elisavetpol and Alexandropol, and more lately those of Kars and Batoum. The whole of it is now ruled by an Imperial Lieutenant (till lately, the Grand Duke Michael) residing at Tiflis. It is divided into twelve governments or provinces, exclusive of Kars and Batoum.

The Caucasus with all its dependencies was in ancient times assigned to Asia. Under its present rulers

it is a separate dominion, belonging neither to European nor to Asiatic Russia, and divided by the main chain into Cis- and Trans-Caucasia, the former comprising all that lies between the mountain-crest and the Caspian ; the latter all between that same crest and the Black Sea.

It has, in round numbers, an area of half a million square kilomètres, with a population of 5,000,000, and is thus about twice as large as Italy, with one-fifth of her inhabitants.

The mixture of races inhabiting this region is one of the most striking phenomena in the world. In Tiflis, the capital, out of 104,000 human beings, there are at least twenty races of men, various in blood and tongue. The Russians muster 30,823, but the Armenians outnumber them by 6787. Next come 22,152 Georgians of various breeds, and the rest is made up of Tartars, Persians, Turks, Jews, and even Assyrians and Chaldeans, besides specimens of various mountain tribes deemed indigenious, the Ossets, Ingush, Aisors, Khefsurs, Lesghians, &c., with whom are intermixed nearly all the members of the European family, 2741 Poles, 2135 Germans, 257 French, 163 Italians, 52 English, and one Scotch shop or bazaar keeper, who is, besides, a poet and essayist. With respect to creeds, 52,392 Russians and Georgians belong to the "Orthodox" or Greco-Russian Church ; 36,000 are Gregorian Armenians, 871 Armenian Catholics, with 3698 other Roman Catholics ; 2177

Lutherans, 1276 Jews, and 4338 Mahomedans. There are between 1000 and 1500 nondescripts, both as to nationality and religion.

The appearance of the town fully corresponds to the peculiarity of its motley population.

It lies on both sides of the river Kur, on various platforms or ledges of the hills, in a position which resembles, and might rival, Florence, were it not for the bare and arid aspect of the surrounding mountains. It is, besides, divided into two parts of old and new city, so different in character as to mark the distinction between civilization and barbarism.

The new town boasts broad, level streets, with wide granite side-walks, lofty palaces, blooming gardens, handsome public and private equipages, splendid shops, clubs, theatres, a Grand Hotel deserving that epithet, and other comfortable inns, and all the contrivances of modern European polish and luxury, with no other drawbacks than a deficiency of good water, gaslights, and drainage.

The old town scrambles up the slope of several hills, one of which, in a central and commanding position, still shows the extensive ruins of what was once a redoubtable stronghold; a maze of narrow, steep, crooked, and dusty streets, something reminding one of the purlieus of Stamboul and Pera-Galata.

Here dwell Persians and Tartars, men wearing enor-

mous turban-shaped fur caps and dirty, tattered, calico caftans ; remarkable for scowling looks and soiled beards, crowding long rows of shops and bazaars and steaming baths—the hot sulphur baths to which the city owes its name—most of their dwellings running up the hill-sides in clusters, tier upon tier, roof upon roof.

The two towns seem to know little of one another and to have little intercourse. You may live for weeks in your hotel near the main bridge, never dreaming of the Eastern quarters, and fancy yourself in a French or Italian town, till a caravan of hundreds of dromedaries or a herd of buffaloes reminds you of the Levant ; and, on the other hand, you must venture into some of the dingiest corners of the heathen quarters if you wish to visit some of the finest Georgian churches of the fifth or sixth century. Yet the various elements of the population seem to live together in peace and amity, the Russian being used, well or ill, as a universal language, and the Cross and Crescent being bound together by common interests of trade and industry. Both in town and country, however, among all the native races of the Caucasus, especially north of the chain, the dialects of the Tartar invaders, the precursors of the Russians, is generally understood.

Over these ill-sorted, heterogeneous masses it may be said that Russia reigns, but hardly attempts to rule. It is in the Caucasus, as in other outlying dependencies of

the empire, that a traveller becomes aware of the little extent to which Russian influence has sunk into the subject races and of the utter impotence for good exhibited by an autocratic Government.

One has only to cross the mountains to perceive a vast difference in this respect between the condition of the mild Georgians and quick-witted Armenians of the South, both of them Christians for many centuries, and proud of the traditions of their ancient civilization, who, besides, came under Russian sway by spontaneous dedication—and that of the Tartars of Daghestan and Circassia, on the northern side, all of them semi-savages, staunch followers of Islam, and less than half reconciled to the Russian yoke, which was only clumsily laid upon them after half a century of bloody and obstinate struggle.

On the north there is, one may say, no law or public security.

We learnt, as we travelled from Petrofsk to Vladikavkas, how Russian officers are still “picked off” both on the highway and in their own houses on any safe opportunity. At Vladikavkas, the Prefect of the police, a Russian gentleman of high rank and thorough refinement, gave us a fearful picture of the state of the country and of the utter failure of the administration of justice.

He had, he told us, that very day to deal with two cases of murder of the most atrocious description.

The house of a railway labourer in the immediate neighbourhood of the town had been entered by a man, who had single-handed killed four out of five of the inmates, only the fifth, a young girl, escaping with a deep and probably fatal gash in her throat. In another case two men had some difference about trifling money matters, and one of them threatened to take the other's life. The threatened man applied to the police for protection; "but," said the Prefect, "we have no preventive action here, and can only interfere upon a magistrate's warrant." A few days later the threatened man is found dead on the threshold of his house with the other man's knife in his heart. The murderers in both cases are apprehended and brought to trial. There is no lack of witnesses and of circumstantial evidence, but "a lawyer, paid to prove that black is white," said the Prefect, "steps forward in behalf of the prisoner and so strongly does his chicane act on the bewildered minds of the Judges, so widespread among the people is the horror of capital punishment, that after the infinite trouble the police has been at to catch the criminal, it has the mortification of seeing him escape thoroughly acquitted; whereupon it is no wonder if the police on its own part, wounded in its sense of right and wrong, slackens in its bootless zeal."

Again, "a man's horse is stolen; he sees another man seated upon his property; summons the thief in

court ; brings with him irrefragable witnesses to thoroughly identify the animal ; the thief has no account to give of the horse, except that ' he bought him at some distant fair and of an unknown person.' The Judge rules that the horse is the defendant's, the thief's, and sends the plaintiff—the real owner—empty away."

I would not, even upon the testimony of a Russian official, infer from these cases that the whole judicial system of Russia, lately reformed on a French model, is merely a mass of incapacity or corruption. I am aware that in Russia, as in many other countries, men belonging to different departments of the public service are often animated by feelings of reciprocal jealousy, and apt to indulge in mutual recriminations. I know that when I speak to a magistrate or to any other " man of the law," I hear nothing but bitter words about the incapacity and venality of the police, which in Russia consists of " men of the sword." And I am placed in the embarrassing alternative of believing neither of both. But when I see the pistols and yataghans hanging on the belts of every man and boy among a population noted for its murdering and thieving propensities—I cannot hesitate to conclude either that the Russian Government cares little or nothing about the life and property of its subjects in these remote provinces, or that it is utterly powerless to protect them.

Our friend the Prefect observed that " it was a pity

the Imperial Government did not on the return of its victorious army at the close of the late Turkish war think of quartering its various corps on the villages of the Caucasian provinces and proceed to the thorough disarmament of the lawless mountaineers." He added that "he had himself both the right and the duty by law of stepping up to any man in the streets and asking upon what warrant he allowed himself to carry arms, confiscating the weapons whenever he received an unsatisfactory answer; but the task of enforcing the law in this respect would entail infinite trouble, and would not be without danger to the public peace."

And thus a state of things is continued which lowers the Empire to a level with Turkey and other most backward barbaric States. For there can be no civilization in a country unless the public force takes upon itself the protection of the subject's life and property and makes itself answerable for their perfect safety; when, as a matter of course, the practice of carrying arms becomes completely useless, and should, at any price, be put an end to as mischievous.

Matters bear, as I hinted, a more satisfactory aspect on this the southern watershed of the Caucasian chain.

Georgia, a divided and unwarlike country, unable to hold its ground against Persian and Turkish inroads, sued for the protection of Russia, a protectorate which grew into absolute sovereignty on the abdication of the

last native reigning prince. This important transaction occurred in the earliest years of the present century, when Alexander I. was on the Throne—a Czar of noble instincts, who, here as in Finland, intended to bestow upon his new subjects the privileges of self-government; and among other conditions stipulated that all the money arising from the revenue of the kingdom should be employed for the country's benefit.

The consequences of this Imperial liberality at the present time are that these Caucasians are more lightly taxed than, perhaps, any other people in the world, the burdens of the State averaging something less than four shillings per head of the population—a small sum to pay for the blessing of immunity from barbaric invasion.

The management of local affairs is also in the hands of Municipal Councils, both in town and in the villages, subject only to the supreme control of the Imperial Lieutenant at Tiflis and of the governors of the twelve or fourteen provinces and their subordinates.

On the other hand, there is no lack of dissatisfaction among the people arising from the very causes that should have insured their contentment.

For, in the first place, it is found that the revenue arising from so light a taxation is inadequate to the achievement of the public works conducive to the development of national prosperity, and that the

Imperial Government takes upon itself no expenses, except such as are required for the maintenance of its military establishment, among which, however, military roads and railroads, beneficial to the whole community, are included.

In the second place, men here complain of the unnecessary interference of the governors and their police in local matters, and of the needless cost of an exorbitantly numerous, complicate, and corrupt administration, mostly recruited among needy Russian place-hunters.

In this respect hopes are entertained that some improvement may be effected by the removal of the Grand Duke Michael and by the substitution of a Lieutenant not of Imperial rank. For the authority of a prince of the blood was too nearly akin to autocracy not to be incompatible with the exercise of free popular will; and thinking men here are glad of the change, great as is the sympathy awakened by the well-meaning prince during his twenty years' administration, and much as some of the minor traders regret the lost custom of the petty court which followed his Imperial Highness on his retirement.

Still the main grievances lie in the sense itself of dependence; in the suppression of those national instincts and yearnings which are now at work in all countries and among men of all races; and in a vague

apprehension of attempts on the part of Russia to absorb, to "Russify" all subject peoples.

Here in Tiflis and throughout the provinces south of the Caucasus the Armenian element preponderates, the native Georgians being too indolent a set of men to resist the encroachments of a superior intelligence and activity. In the city, as we have seen, the Armenians are to the Georgians as 37 to 22; and in the Municipal Council, elected by the free suffrage of all ratepayers, 50 out of the 72 members with the mayor are Armenians. But the Armenians, though powerful in Georgia, have even stronger connections in Russian Armenia and in those provinces of Persia and Turkey—Erzeroum, Van, Tabriz, &c.—towards which the power of Russia irresistibly gravitates.

Though the Armenians are too small and too scattered a tribe ever to aspire to be a self-standing nation, they feel that they are here the people of the future, and they resent any attempt to blot out their name or crush their individuality. They have no objection to being Russian subjects. They acknowledge that they are fairly dealt with, that a free career is open to them to high distinction both in the State and in the army. But they wish to be Armenians before all things; and they object especially to those claims of the dominant Church, which in their domestic or social relations and especially with respect to the marriage

laws, places the votaries of their old Church at a disadvantage; for an Armenian, marrying a Russian or a Georgian, must consent to bring up all his children in the orthodox—*i. e.* the Russian Church.

The adhesiveness to their nationality and creed is so strong among the Armenians that on and after the annexation of Kars and Batoum, at the close of the late war, some of the people of that race constituting the majority, especially of the rural population, chose to follow the vanquished Turks in their emigration, both they and the actual Armenian subjects of the Sultan declaring that they prefer the Turkish yoke and the ravaging incursions of the Kurds to the absorption of their name and the extinction of their ethnical and ecclesiastical autonomy under Russian sway.

Even the Georgians, who belonged to the Greek denomination before Russia was heard of, have reason to complain of the arbitrary fusion of their Church with the Russian; for, although they have still an Exarch at their head, his appointment lies with the Czar, who chooses him from among the members of the St. Petersburg Synod, or immediately ascribes him among them, thus subjecting the Georgian Church to the Synod's authority and depriving it of autonomy.

In spite of all these causes of discontent and of the instinctive antipathy of all the annexed subjects of the Czar for the ruling race, which the Russians in their

turn heartily reciprocate, there are no actual elements of disorder or dissolution in the Caucasus ; for, on the one hand, the people here feel that their connection with the great Empire is for them a condition of existence ; and, on the other, they are ready to admit that they have no hardships to complain of from which their Russian fellow-subjects do not equally suffer ; and they enjoy besides above them all the advantages of a more bountiful soil and a more blissful climate.

Some idea of the disposition of mind of these people towards their Northern masters may be formed from an amusing scene which I happened to witness :

Tiflis, which is always gayest at this, the bathing season, was this year unusually enlivened by the meeting within its walls of the Imperial Archæological Society of Russia.

The Mayor and Corporation of the town entertained the members of the Association with an Armenian play at the theatre, and a banquet for 230 persons at the Armenian Summer Club, where magniloquent speeches in various European and Asiatic languages were read or spoken.

Judging by outward seeming, nothing could be more cordial than the good-humour and mutual good-will of all persons present.

But I happened to be seated at a side-table with about thirty or forty young townsmen, choice spirits of

the place, Armenians most of them, all well educated, most of them journalists, with whom I spoke French. Among them sat a solitary Russian officer, a Colonel, evidently unacquainted with that language.

At first my Armenian friends whispered their suspicions that he was "a spy," and that threw a damper on their festive mood; but when they perceived from his blank stolid countenance that French was Greek to him, the withering jeers and sarcasms with which they covertly assailed him, the abuse which, warmed with champagne, they hurled at him and at everybody and everything Russian, were certainly more creditable to their Caucasian wit than to their Christian charity.

When the banquet was at an end I stood at the door with some of those same friends amidst the group of persons assembled to see the magnates of the assembly as they were leaving the hall.

First came the Mayor, the host *ex officio*, a highly intelligent and deservedly very popular man, an Armenian, who was greeted with loud cheers and applause.

Next followed, as the most honoured guest, a stout, square-built man in a General's uniform, with a countenance beaming with good-nature; and he was the Russian vice-governor, doing duty as head of the State, while the return of the Grand Duke Michael was still doubtful. He had the President and the chief members of

the Archæological around him, and for him or for them a chorus of cheering shouts was also raised. But I was not a little struck on hearing from the crowd behind me half a dozen voices, distant and subdued but perfectly audible, crying, "Cetiwayo!" "Cetiwayo!"

And as soon as the governor and his suite were well out of hearing, the groups broke up and mingled together, while that well-known name was bandied about from one end of the hall to the other, amid significant sneers and titters.

It was not long before my friends gave me the key to the meaning of the joke.

The vice-governor, a man not particularly hated, but not very highly thought of, went among them by the strangely far-fetched, but, in the opinion of these people (who traced some resemblance in his features to those they had seen in the photographs of the Zulu chief), not ill-fitting nick-name of Cetiwayo.

Had I been at Milan, before the famous "Five Days" of 1848, when Lombardy was Austrian, and Radetzky was governor, I should have expected to see just such a scene, and I should have drawn just the same conclusion :

"These people make fun of Rulers of whom, if they could, they would fain make mince-meat."

I have said that the Caucasus is with respect to soil and climate something like another Italy on a

larger scale, but that it labours under the disadvantage of a scanty population, the average throughout the Caucasian region being 10 to 20 inhabitants in the square verst; while in Poland and Little Russia it is 40 to 50 per square verst. It need not be added that the cultivation of the Caucasus falls immensely short of the capabilities of its soil and climate.

Like Italy, the Caucasus enjoys almost every variety of temperature, favourable to the development of nearly all northern and southern produce. Its mountain-sides are admirably suited for the vine, the mulberry, and all fruit-trees; its plains would yield all cereals, especially maize and rice, even if almost boundless space were left for the breeding of horses and cattle.

Unfortunately, where Nature is more lavish of her gifts, man is apt to spoil her work by the curse of his indolence and improvidence. Like Italy, but even in a more fatal degree than Italy, the Caucasus labours under the alternate calamities of drought and flood, to which is added the occasional visitation of swarms of locusts. The mountains have in many districts been stripped to the bare rock, the plains have been turned into unhealthy swamps. The Mayor of Tiflis (a man to whose friendship I profess as much obligation as to the governor of Astrakhan), though still in the prime of life, tells us, "He remembers the time when the mountains round the city were mantled with dense woods;

they are now cleared even of brushwood ; and firewood is consequently very dear."

And Her Majesty's Consul adds :

"The practice of denuding the mountains which goes on throughout the valley of the Kur has resulted in either completely drying up or seriously diminishing the volume of water in the river. Unless measures are taken for replanting the mountain forests, famines may ere long be expected to take place."

It is the old story applicable to all southern countries. The water, which is only too plentiful for spring and autumn inundation, can no longer be husbanded for the purposes of summer irrigation. One can see throughout the plains of Georgia the traces of the canals by which water was in olden times distributed all over the cultivated fields. But all ancient system of irrigation is broken up and obliterated, and of the new canals which have lately been planned by the Imperial Government, aided by private enterprise, "very few," as we learn from consular reports, "have been carried out."

From these and other causes immense tracts even of the best land lie waste ; and such cultivation as one sees is of the primitive, slovenly, and exhaustive kind common to all Russia, two-thirds of the fields being allowed to lie fallow, and manure being, as useless for agricultural purposes, either buried or thrown into the

rivers, where it accumulates to the extent of becoming an encumbrance and a nuisance.

Nevertheless, the country is naturally rich, and exports between four and five million roubles worth of goods from the harbour of Poti alone. The chief articles sent abroad are wool, silk, maize, rice, indigo, box and walnut wood, carpets, &c. The trade is chiefly carried on with France, Turkey, and England; but France has the lion's share and almost monopoly of such trade as Russia herself does not absorb. For, though France's trade is more than four times as large as that of England, it is barely one-fourth of that of Russia; the main economical advantage accruing to the Empire from the possession of the Caucasus being the power she has of maintaining by high protective duties a safe market for her Moscow tissues, her Tula cutlery, and all other home manufactures, a privilege which does, however, not prevent French, English, and even American shopkeepers in Tiflis, driving a thriving contraband trade in this and other Caucasian cities.

But the Caucasus is of far greater importance to Russia as the channel through which her trade can be extended to all parts of Central and Southern Asia, her commercial enterprise rather outstripping than following close the course traced out for many years by her policy of territorial aggrandizement.

The Caucasus is like a great wedge thrust between

Persia and Asiatic Turkey. It is the highway which is to lead the merchandises as well as the arms of Russia to the shores of the Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean, sooner than any of her roads or railroads across the Ural, *viú* Perm or Orenburg—sooner than her almost exclusive navigation of the Caspian Sea.

Unfortunately for Russia, her communication with the Caucasus is as yet in a very unsatisfactory condition.

Her lines of railway end at Vladikavkas, at the foot of the main Caucasian chain, and the military high-road by which the chain is traversed is often interrupted by storm and avalanche in the winter for three or four weeks at a time. A railway from Vladikavkas to Tiflis has been projected for several years; the surveys have been made, and the cost reckoned at about 20,000,000 roubles. Tiflis being reached, it is expected that the railway will strike across the valley of the Kur to Erivan and Elisavetpol, and all across Russian Armenia, to join the Turkish and Persian railways, which will some day come up to Erzeroum and Tabriz.

All this will require a great deal of money, and it is not easy to foresee how far the expense may be warranted by the expectation of corresponding profits.

Meanwhile the almost total lack of means of communication in these provinces stands in the way of their well-being in two ways. It disheartens the husbandman, who cannot see to what purpose he should

endeavour to multiply and improve the fruits of the earth, as when he has produced them he has no road by which he may easily convey them to market; and, on the other hand, the consumers in the city, though they would gladly pay for the best produce, must put up with what they have at hand, however bad and dear; for what might be good and cheap cannot, owing to the absence of roads, be brought to their doors.

Hence provisions here are bad in quality and high in price. They have trebled in Tiflis within the last ten years. Vegetables, with the exception of potatoes and cabbages, are difficult to procure at all. Fruit, which is very plentiful, and costs little or nothing in the villages, is very bad, and dearer in Tiflis than in England; and "fresh butter, when obtainable, sells at so high a price, that it would pay to import butter from Ireland or Denmark."

These statements, which I borrow from consular reports, I am able to confirm on personal inquiry. Timber and firewood, still growing in the mountains to an immense extent, are left intact because inaccessible, while "in many parts of the country dried cow-dung is used for fuel." Owing to the same causes, mines of the best coal, as well as of salt, copper, and silver lead are unproductive. What more? In a country possessing boundless wealth in naphtha and kerosine oil, this latter substance "is to be had at Tiflis imported

from America both cheaper and better (more carefully refined) than that coming from Baku, less than 400 miles off."

With respect to this last subject, however, what is said of the capabilities of this country seems almost to exceed all credibility. "Petroleum," it is asserted, "in enormous subterranean lakes and reservoirs, underlies the Caucasian region from sea to sea." It is largely found beneath the steppes both north and south of the mountain chain. At Baku and the Peninsula of Apscheron, at the end of the chain, on the Caspian, naphtha has its main sources. The Dowager Princess with whom I parted at Petrofsk, was not indulging her poetic fancies when she told me that "naphtha bursts forth in copious springs, sending up tall liquid columns not unlike the Geysers in Iceland." That spring which, I then heard, was reported to be on fire as we left Astrakhan, had only burnt itself out, after ten days' conflagration, when we reached Vladikavkas.

Up to this time, as I said, the difficulty of conveying this material to Tiflis stood in the way of the full development of this marvellous source of wealth. But a railway from Baku to Tiflis, to be connected with that between Tiflis and Poti, on the Black Sea, and thus establishing a communication all across the Isthmus, is now in progress, and ought to be opened to traffic within the present year. On the line between Tiflis and Poti,

I have already seen at the stations some large tumbrils destined for that special trade.

For the conveyance of naphtha, Mr. Tweddel, an American, offered to construct a line of pipes or tubes from Baku to Poti, running the oil along them by hydraulic pressure; but he was unable to come to terms with the Imperial Government to whom he applied for a concession. He has now, I am told, made a successful experiment of his invention in the neighbourhood of the Peninsula of Taman on the opposite or north-western side of the Isthmus.

But, by whatever means the liquid may be conveyed from the spring to the various seaports and railway-stations of the world, it seems likely to effect little less than an economical revolution. There is scarcely any use, domestic or social, that naphtha cannot be put to. It will yield warmth and light to the houses, it will supply fuel for the steam-engine. Already, as we have seen, in the Caspian and on the Volga, some of the steam companies use no other combustible than naphtha refuse. Were the liquid really inexhaustible, as it is here asserted, and could it be made to travel so cheaply as to undersell English and other coal in countries like Italy, Spain, and other Mediterranean regions where coal sells at three guineas a ton, it would be hardly possible to reckon what enormous wealth would accrue to the people of the Caucasus from this revelation of an

underground treasure of which they hardly suspected the existence. And it would at the same time be equally impossible to calculate what immense benefit this country would confer on nations whom the scarcity of fuel to a great extent deprives of home comfort, and cripples in all attempts to introduce modern improvements, and to run the race with their neighbours in many branches of industrial enterprise.

Fire and light are the elements of life : and it would be strange if some of the best gifted races of mankind were henceforth to be indebted for warmth and light to the land where Prometheus suffered for his theft of the spark which was to animate the human clay. To obtain this result only two conditions are required—that the naphtha of Baku should be inexhaustible, and that it should be sold cheap enough to keep within limits the ever-rising price of Newcastle coal.

CHAPTER XVI.

TIFLIS TO BATOUM.

The Climate of Tiflis—Approaching Winter—Tiflis to Kutais—Georgia—Georgian Princes—Prince Murat—Kutais—Kutais Jews—A Monastery—Monks—Royal Tombs—A View—A Centenarian—Kutais to Poti—Medea's Home—The Country—The People—The Government—Smoking Women—Poti to Batoum—Importance of Batoum to Russia—The Russian Black Sea Coast.

WE were still at Tiflis at the end of September, enjoying in that happy climate a summer of which, without consulting the almanack, it would have been impossible to foretell the approaching close. The people about us, however, were on the look-out for cold weather, and preparing for it.

For, although Tiflis is nearly on the same parallel as Rome, between 41° and 42° north, and has the shelter of the main Caucasian chain in its rear—all circumstances that give the place almost a tropical climate—it stands at the same time at so great an altitude amidst bleak mountains, that, although by day the heat of the sun is almost unbearable, the chill mountain breezes and the

damp fogs of the night affect the temperature to an extent that is neither agreeable to the feeling, nor, I was told, conducive to health. And my friend, the Mayor, with whom early one morning I had planned an excursion to the hills, warned me not to start without my wrappers; "for," he said, "you must not forget that you are still in Russia."

This reminded me that I had in reality still to go back to Russia, and that, unless I wished to run the chance of being snowed up somewhere ere I reached Warsaw and Berlin, I had better not wait for the months which wrought such dire sufferings to the army of the first Napoleon.

On an early day of October, therefore, I took the train from Tiflis to Poti and Batoum.

Tiflis lies in a vast shell, surrounded by mountains on all sides, with no other opening than that of the narrow valley of the Kur, which comes up to the city from the west, and, on issuing from it, turns to the south-east, is joined by the Aras at Dshevat, and flows, blended with it, to the Caspian.

The railway to Poti ascends the upper valley of the Kur, proceeds to Gori and the Surak Pass, and there crosses a transversal mountain-ridge which joins the main chain of the Caucasus with the Armenian mountains.

West of the Surak Pass, on the eastern watershed,

are the springs of the Rion, or Faz, the ancient Phasis, or Pheasant river, two of whose branches meet at Kutais, and hence flow to the Black Sea at Poti.

We wound at first up the Kur valley among the mountains, the valley widening as we ascended, and unfolding before us a lovely region, with as rich and well cultivated a soil as the best in Italy, the fields protected by hedges, with well-wooded hills on either side, and an occasional peep into the snow-capped summits on our right.

These are the regions of the Kabetians, Imeritians, and Mingrelians, districts of Georgia ; a country equally famous for its bountiful land and its beautiful women.

We left the main line of railway at the Rion Junction, and proceeded by a short branch to Kutais, which we reached in a twenty minutes' run. Kutais is the capital of Imeritia, and was till lately the residence of one of the many Georgian Princes.

Many of these, as the world knows, once held a more or less independent sway over these districts, but were reft of their feudal rights by the Russian Government, and reduced to actual want by the abolition of their *Majorats* and the consequent division and subdivision of their property, to such an extent that they now depend for subsistence on any mite of patronage that may fall to them at Court, or in the civil and military service of the Empire, some of them sinking so low in the social scale,

that, it is said, "you now and then fall in with a Georgian Prince earning his bread at St. Petersburg as a droski-driver or a shoe-black."

Some of them, however, are still holding up their heads against adversity; but, as far as I know, none is so well off as Prince Dadian of Mingrelia, the descendant of the Sovereign Princes of that district, in whose favour all the family property was erected into a *Majorat* by the late Emperor, who alone has the right of altering at his pleasure the law of succession prescribing the division of patrimonies among all the children of the same parents.

Prince Dadian's sister, the Princess Salomé, is married to Prince Achille Murat, the younger of the two grandsons of the "Beau Sabreur," who reigned at Naples, and was shot at Pizzo in Calabria. These two grandsons, as we all remember, stood high in favour with the Third Napoleon, who, had he had his way after Solferino, intended to replace them on the throne from which the First Napoleon's brother-in-law had fallen. But the hopes of the young Pretenders fell with the Second Empire; and Prince Achille, like all other Napoleonides, probably found the Paris of Gambetta's Republic little to his taste, for we met him here, at the hotel, at Kutais, with his Georgian Princess—a handsome couple, with lovely and lively children, on a visit to the estates constituting the Princess's dowry, where the

family, we are told, would henceforth take up their residence.

Kutais is a pleasant little town at the foot of the hills, where the Jews have two synagogues and are building a third. They live in wretched hovels, though they are rich enough to deserve the appellation of "Israelites," according to Heine's definition of the word, and make their money by impartially lending it to the broken nobility and the emancipated peasantry of a fertile land which is rapidly passing into the usurer's hands; and they hold their own against the Armenians, to whom they grudge a share in their gains; for these two races seemed convinced that "two of a trade can never agree," and are seldom, if ever, to be seen thriving side by side in the same locality.

The Jews of Kutais and, in general, of the Caucasian region, though not looked upon by the people with any particular affection, are not, however, envied or hated with the same intensity of feeling which has lately broken out in some parts of Germany, as well as of Southern and Western Russia; as the presence of the Mussulmans for so many years in these Caucasian regions, and the efficient measures taken by them to enforce the "Truce of God" among the votaries of different religions, have had the effect of establishing and maintaining, if not tolerance, at least something like mutual forbearance. At Jerusalem itself we all

know to our shame how soon Christian brethren would fly to each other's throats in the very Temple, were it not for the contemptuous neutrality of the Turkish peacemaker.

The object of our short stay at Kutais, however, was not to have any dealings with these obliging Hebrews, but merely to visit Gelat, or Ghelat, a monastery far up in the mountains, to which we drove in a carriage with four horses abreast, by so steep a road that we only accomplished the distance of about ten versts in a laborious journey of two hours.

Here we had a peep into the Old World.

The church and belfry and other buildings of the monastery date from the 10th century, and are among the finest specimens of early Byzantine style; and the monks exhibit a perfect museum of gilt and jewelled images, of paintings and parchments, of mass-books, and every imaginable curiosity of church vessels and priestly vestments and knick-knacks of monkish workmanship in the Dark Ages; all treasures which have miraculously escaped the ravages of long periods of pagan and barbaric violence.

We were also shown the vault with the sepulchres of the earliest Princes of the Georgian dynasty, the huge monumental stones of which consist of such enormous flat square blocks that they have never been made to reveal their secrets and seem by their weight to defy

even the all-prying, all-desecrating curiosity of our present age.

The monks themselves would, to any man not implacably hostile to their cloth, have been an object of considerable interest; for they were tall and majestic, and had the finest and best chiselled set of features, with thin, brown hair down to their shoulders, and dark violet eyes, and soft voices; a half-feminine, sedate and dignified air; and altogether a strong family resemblance that spoke of kindred blood, and of the ties of their common Levitical caste.

We stopped a long time in friendly converse with them, though they spoke no Western language, and I could only commune with them through my interpreter.

On the balcony of these good monks' dwelling, at a height of several thousand feet above the town and valley, we stood as if on a "Stone of vision overlooking all the realms of the earth," all within the compass of Titanic mountains—a sight hardly to be seen once in a man's life, as we beheld it in the clearest and softest weather, in the witching hour of evening, the landscape darkening in the long shadows of the hills; the snowy summits blushing in the last beams of the sun just set; the scene taking away our breath and awing us into silence—a sight once seen never to be forgotten.

The monks called our attention to the hideous figure of a man doubled up with age, who they said had been

hobbling about their church and grounds as a beggar time out of any living man's memory, and was now 120 years old. Truly a religious life and mountain air work wonders. I wished the monks, all of them, as long a life; a pious compliment at which they smiled rather dimly as if not half relishing it; for a decrepit age like that inspires us—till it comes upon us—with a greater horror than death itself.

The remainder of the journey from Kutais to Poti was accomplished across a flat, alluvial plain, where cultivation soon ceases and the ground is covered by a rank, half-flooded forest resembling that of the Tuscan marshes between Pisa and Leghorn.

Even here, however, good pasture is found for enormous flocks and herds; while the slopes of the hills which flank the road, now on this now on that side, teem with fine crops of maize and cotton and tobacco, or are planted with vineyards whose foliage is hardly yet blushing with the first autumn tints; a happy region which yields much and would yield all, were only man as thrifty as Nature is bountiful.

Poti lies at the end of a vast swamp at the mouth of the river, and may, as it is supposed, have been the spot where Jason landed when he came here in quest of the Golden Fleece, and made that acquaintance with Medea which ended in the well-known tragic catastrophe. The region is the ancient Colchis, the Rion is the old river

Phasis, Kutais was the residence of King *Æetes*, and *Medea's* maiden home.

To what extent the country may have been altered by the lapse of so many ages it is difficult to say ; but *Poti* at the present time has become almost uninhabitable from the prevalence of malaria fevers, and its river is so choked up by sands that even *Jason's* primitive barge *Argos* might find it difficult to sail over the bar.

It was the unfitness of the harbour of *Poti* for modern trade that made the Russians so eager to seize *Batoum*, a port about thirty miles south of *Poti*, in their late wars with the Turks.

Few can have forgotten the excitement created among politicians in England and throughout Europe by the announcement that both at *San Stefano* and at *Berlin* Russia put forward a cession of unconquered *Batoum* as the chief condition on which she would sign with Turkey a treaty of peace. The importance of *Batoum* as the port Russia had so long coveted on the eastern coast of the *Euxine*, the only practicable outlet for the produce of her vast Caucasian dominions into the western world, was made the topic of endless discussion between those who exaggerated and those who under-valued it. It is extremely likely that neither the Turks who lost, nor the Russians who won, the disputed harbour, were well aware of its advantages or capabilities. But at all events

Batoum is now in Russia's hands, and has been for a few years, and it is still questionable whether either Batoum alone, or both Batoum and Poti, even put together and joined by the railway which is now being constructed, will answer the purpose of the immense trade which must find there an outlet if the railway all across the isthmus from Baku to Tiflis to the two harbours is soon completed, and if the export of the naphtha, to say nothing of all the other produce of this most fertile region, answers reasonable expectations.

For Batoum, though a sufficiently deep and well-sheltered haven, seemed to me to have barely room for nine or ten steamers at a time; and although at Poti a new port has been laid out and the moles are being built outside the harbour, and away from the river, the dredging of the ever-silting sands must needs be a heavy and ever-recurring expense, tasking the perseverance and exhausting the resources both of public and private enterprise.

The best of such circumstances must, however, be made, for, as I said, the Caucasian region has hardly any other available outlet on the coast from Kertch to Trebizond.

As they appeared to me now, both Poti and Batoum are mean and wretched towns, the first with 4000, the second with 3000 inhabitants; both are unhealthy, and

so unsafe in their neighbourhood that no one ventures beyond their suburbs without an escort, as the mountains are infested by marauding bands from the neighbouring region of Lazistan, a district which seems to breed nothing but a race of land and sea robbers.

It is only too evident that the Caucasus is one of those big mouthfuls which Russia found it easier to swallow than to digest, for, although the Georgians are a less fierce and lawless set of men than their fellow-subjects in Daghestan and in the other districts to the north of the main Caucasian chain, one is startled even in Georgia by the frequency of atrocious crimes; and the Government is by no means sufficiently powerful to enforce the law or to bring the most notorious criminals to justice.

And in a recent instance when a whole detachment of Russian soldiers were cut to pieces by some savages away in the mountains, and when the murderers were actually apprehended, tried, and sentenced to death, the mistaken clemency of the late Emperor interfered, commuting the penalty to transportation to Siberia, a doom which has now lost all its deterring influence over hardened ill-doers.

It was not natural for any man travelling through Georgia not to be on the look-out for that beauty which has long been described as the common gifts of its happy inhabitants. Nor was I, for one, more than half

disappointed ; for the men we had with us in the train, or saw here and there in town or country, do not certainly belie their reputation ; for they are, mostly, tall and well-made, and have the pencilled high brow, the thin aquiline nose, the good mouth, and fine regular teeth peculiar to the Caucasian type. They all, high and low, affect the Oriental garb ; wear long, dark, almost trailing garments, round fur caps, or white cloths, turban-fashioned, but cumbrously and fantastically, if not picturesquely, falling in folds and flaps to their shoulders ; and all are girt with a silver belt on which hang a ponderous scimitar and a long yataghan.

The practice of bearing arms is as universal among these Christians as among their most savage Mussulman fellow-subjects, though there is nothing warlike, or even very manly in the look and bearing of these indolent and, to judge by appearance, enervated and backboneless Georgians. And it is impossible to look at them and at all their warlike paraphernalia, without being reminded how little their weapons availed them against Persians and Turks, from whose inroads they could find no other escape than in an ignoble surrender of their national existence : no refuge from the Turk except in the arms of the Russian !

There was nothing to call forth our admiration in the other, and what ought to have been the better, half of the Georgian population.

We saw no striking specimen of female beauty anywhere on our way.

Here, as everywhere in Russia, females of all ranks go about with their cigarette-case and box of wax-matches in their pockets. I could have fancied myself among my old acquaintance, the slobbering Indian squaws of Paraguay. Really, after all the squeamish and fussy horror the fair sex evinced for the "weed," from the day of Queen Elizabeth to those of Queen Victoria, is it not too provoking and disgusting that they should now show so little regard for the whiteness of their teeth and the sweetness of their breath?

I do not know whether it was my hatred of the foul unfeminine practice, or the clouds of smoke they puffed in my face, that prevented my seeing anything but ordinary features, and a vacant, sensual, half-animal expression in the great majority of Georgian young women.

We arrived at Poti about the middle of the day, and we had so contrived our movements as to avoid spending the night there, in obedience to the warnings of our friends against the fever-breeding air of that swampy, pestilential place.

We only lunched at Poti and made the acquaintance of the British Consul of Batoum, at that moment on a visit to the British Consul at Poti, and we secured our berths on board the steamer which was to take us

round the Russian Black Sea coast from Batoum to Odessa.

Before the middle of the 18th century Russia did not possess an inch of territory on the shores of the Euxine. Some of the earliest princes of the House of Ruric, who visited the Court of the Greek Emperors at Constantinople, are reported to have extended their sway over some part of these southern regions; but the tide of barbaric irruptions soon ensued, and their successors, overcome by the Mongol Tartars at Khalka, on the Sea of Azof, near the site of the present town of Mariupol, in the 13th century (1224), had to fall back on their northern estates, where for more than 200 years they kept up a struggle for existence, in which craft availed them better than valour.

The Tartars, strongly established on the Volga from Kasan to Astrakhan, had equally overrun the southern coast from the Don to the Dnieper and Dniester, and their most powerful horde was at Bakchiserai, in the heart of the Crimea.

From the 12th to the 15th century the Genoese, who had gained a footing on the Bosphorus, effected a landing on various points of the northern coast of the Black Sea, and at Kertch, at Kaffa, Balaclava, &c., they founded colonies or "factories," all dependent on their *Podestà* at Galata, which held their ground against the Tartars till, after the fall of Constantinople,

in 1453, these latter found a powerful auxiliary in the Turks.

Backed by the Turks, the horde at Bakchiserai was able to make a stand against Russia long after Kazan and Astrakhan had succumbed to the onset of Ivan the Terrible (1552-1556); so that Russia, already at home on the Volga and throughout Siberia, was still longing for an opening into the southern sea, and perceived that she would never obtain it till she was in a position to measure her strength against that of the whole Ottoman Empire.

This contest between czars and sultans, between the Cross and the Crescent, began under Peter the Great, who in the early years of his reign took possession of Azof. But his disasters on the Pruth compelled him to abandon that conquest and to turn his energies to the Baltic, where he aggrandized himself at the expense of Sweden and Poland.

His plans for the subjugation of the South were carried out by Catherine II., a Sovereign who, by a feminine instinct of "natural selection," bestowed her favours on men recommended to her by physical attractions, but most of whom justified her partiality by the more valuable gifts of intellect and character. Under the auspices of "the Great Empress," the Russian armies overpowered the Turks by land and sea, and wrested from them those Treaties of Kutchuk-Kainardji (1774)

and Jassy (1792) which obtained for them the free navigation of the Euxine, together with the Crimea and a vast extent of the adjoining mainland.

Catherine's conquests were followed by important annexations under her successors, with so much perseverance and good fortune that the Russian coast on the Black Sea extends now from the river Chorok, about twenty versts south of Batoum, to the neighbourhood of Kilia, on the northern mouth of the Danube, or very nearly over one-half of the circumference of the Euxine, leaving the other half to the Ottomans and to their former Roumanian and Bulgarian subjects.

We went with the two consuls down from Poti to Batoum in a wretched tug in four hours, and there I and my interpreter embarked in the 'Czarevna,' one of the gallant steamers of the Russian company plying along the coast, the best and best-served boats afloat in any sea, and the only institution besides the railway between St. Petersburg and Moscow by which Russia seemed to me to show her capabilities for a high rank among civilized nations.

The distance from Batoum to Odessa is 590 miles, and the voyage, with all deviations and stoppages, is usually accomplished in about ninety hours. We steamed along the Caucasian coast to Soukhoun Kale, and made straight for Kertch at the entrance of the sea

of Azof. From Kertch we crossed over to Theodosia and Yalta. At this latter place we landed, and proceeded by post along the coast from Yalta to Sebastopol. At Sebastopol we took our berth on board the 'Olga,' which conveyed us to Odessa in nineteen hours, touching at Eupatoria as we passed.

CHAPTER XVII.

BATOUM TO ODESSA.

The Black Sea Coast—Batoum to Kertch—Kertch to Yalta—A Russian Paradise—Yalta to Baidar—The Russian *Cornice*—Sebastopol—Odessa—Character of the Place—Trade of Odessa—Rivalry of other Black Sea Ports—Sebastopol a Commercial Port—Rivalry of the Baltic Ports—The Jews of Odessa—The Grain Trade—American Competition—Backwardness of Russia—*P.S.* Russian Atrocities.

THE coast of the Black Sea along the Caucasus from Batoum to the Strait of Kertch is a succession of mountain scenery of surpassing beauty; the hills mantled all over with luxuriant verdure, declining with a gradual, but continuous slope as one advances from south-east to north-west, till they sink into mere sand-banks round the Taman Peninsula, opposite to Kertch; a country blessed by nature, and which, like other parts of the Caucasus, could be made to bear all the fruits of the earth, and especially any quantity of the wine, many excellent qualities of which, especially of that of Kahetia, we tasted at Tiflis, Kutais, and all along our route.

Unfortunately, large tracts of the coast and of the inland country are not only uncultivated, but utterly uninhabited, the Mussulman part of the population either migrating on the advance of the Russians, or dwindling away in their numbers, and actually becoming extinct, in consequence of the wholesale disposal of their children, both boys and girls, as slaves for the harems of Constantinople, Smyrna, and the other marts of the Levant. The Russians have as yet been unable to bring new settlers to fill the Moslems' vacant homes.

From Batoum at 8 P.M. the 'Czarevna' took us straight to Soukhoum Kale, where we arrived late in the evening by moonlight, and soon proceeded to Kertch, where we found ourselves at 8 A.M. on the following day.

At Kertch we landed for a few hours and went up the hill known by the name of "Mithridates's arm-chair," walking up some flights of winding stairs, shabby and dilapidated, but reminding one of those leading up to the Trinità de' Monti in Rome. From the summit we took in at a glance the town and its singular position, and the fortifications on which the Imperial Government has been lavishing vast sums of money which might, perhaps, have been better employed.

The town, the old "Cerchio" of the Genoese in the Middle Ages, is tidy and clean, and apparently thriving, the Jews coming in for a large proportion of its 22,000 inhabitants, and monopolizing the trade in such

antiquities as have been left by the Government after the removal of the best part of its valuable museum to St. Petersburg.

The environs of Kertch and Yenikale, at the narrowest point of the Strait, are bare and bleak and desolate. What is not barren steppe is sand, through which no little effort is required to keep open a channel of sufficient depth for the navigation of the Strait and of the land-locked Sea of Azof.

We lost sight of Kertch and of the shores of the Sea of Azof at about noon, and soon descried at a great distance the hills of the south coast of the Crimea.

The weather, which had been gloomy and wintry at Kertch, as it generally is in the vicinity of the steppes, changed again on a sudden to the mildness and brightness which had favoured us along the Caucasian shores.

We landed in the evening at Theodosia, the Genoese Caffa, where we called upon Aivazowski, the "Russian artist" as he is called, being, indeed, a Russian subject, but who was born and habitually lives here, and is, by descent, an Armenian. The artist, unfortunately for us, was from home, and the pictures which he liberally shows to visitors by day, and even at night by electric light, were already on their way to Rome. Aivazowski is now at the height of his reputation, and his works, after Rome, are destined for the Salon and Burlington-house, where they cannot fail to be fully appreciated.

Both at Theodosia and Sudak, a little further west, and at Yalta and other old Genoese or Venetian settlements traces of the constructive energy of the Mediæval Italians had survived the havoc of the many centuries of Turkish occupation, but have been further swept away and almost obliterated by the Russians, whose destructiveness in these regions has been carried to the extremes of more than Mussulman barbarism.

It was four o'clock in the morning when the 'Czarevna' came to her moorings at Yalta, and the full moon was about to set behind the crest of the dark, steep hills shutting in like a wall the little town which the Russians have made one of the loveliest watering-places in the world.

It nestles in that mere ledge of a valley like a swan, close to the edge of a sea which had at that hour all the smoothness and purity of a mountain lake. The place has a grand hotel on the model of that of Beaurivage, at Ouchy, near Lausanne, and other palatial inns, rivalling the comforts of the best at Lucerne or Zurich. Its quays are crowded with stylish equipages, well-mounted riders, and well-dressed promenaders, and there is no lack of fine shops and large stalls of luscious fruits—a full evidence that the Russians of the upper classes have both taste and money and a well made-up mind to enjoy life while they may.

The hotels were all crowded and rooms were

bespoken a fortnight beforehand ; crowded with Russians, for the place is as yet unknown to foreign visitors, and we found no English here or anywhere else on our route across the Caucasus, with the exception of a marquis, a young peer, who was travelling with his wife, and whom I met at various stages on the Caucasus and at Tiflis, and a gallant admiral who was at the British Consul's at Kertch, when I called, and who was apparently curious about the new fortifications of a spot which had good reason to remember him 26 years ago.

As there was no rooms for us at Yalta, we just rambled on the hills to admire the beauties of the valley, and left at noon by carriage for Sebastopol.

From Yalta to Sebastopol there are two routes. One strikes across the Yaïla hills to Simpheropol, whence we could proceed by rail to Sebastopol ; the other runs along the coast, high up on the hills, to the Baidar Gate and through the Baidar Valley leading to Balaclava and the other well-known spots encompassing the ruins of what was once the great naval station of the Russians on the Black Sea.

We chose the coast route, and travelled for five hours in the afternoon over 48 versts of the most singular road in the world.

It rambles up and down along the side of the hills—as a road did once on the beautiful Cornice along the Ligurian Riviera—midway between the upper hill crest

and the sea, having on the right the mountains, a succession of wall-like, perpendicular, hoary cliffs, between 1500 feet and 2000 feet high, a great wall riven into every variety of fantastic shapes of bastions, towers, and pyramids, all bare and rugged, crumbling here and there into huge boulders, strewn along the slopes down to the road, across the road, and further down to the water-edge, a scene which might befit the battle-field of the Titans against the gods; and on the left the wide expanse of the waters, with a coast like a fringe of little glens and creeks and headlands, and the sun's glitter on the waves like Dante's "*tremolar della marina*" on the shore of Purgatory.

Between the road and the sea far below us, in the distance, embosomed in woods still untouched by the autumn frosts, lay the marine villas of Livadia, Orianda, Alupka, &c., very Edens, where on their first annexation of the Crimea the wealthy Russians sought a refuge against the horrors of their wintry climate; more recently, Imperial residences—Livadia, the darling of the late Emperor; Orianda, now a mere wreck from the recent conflagration, the seat of the Grand Duke Constantine; Alupka, the abode of Prince Woronzoff, the son of the benevolent genius of these districts, the road-maker, the patron of Yalta, the second founder of Odessa.

A scene of irresistible enchantment is the whole of

what the Russians emphatically call their "southern coast." And, as if to enhance its charms by contrast, everything changes as you pass the Baidar Gate, and when you have crossed the Baidar Valley the balmy air becomes raw and chill, the bald mountains tame and common-place, and the long descent is through an ashy-gray country, swept over by an icy blast, saddened by a lowering sky, unrelieved by a flower, a bush, or a cottage. So marvellous is the power of mere position, so great the difference between the two sides of the same mountain-wall! You pass at once from a garden to a steppe.

Away from these sheltering rocks, away from the southern slopes of the Caucasian ridges, you are in Russia. The only mountains throughout all the rest of the Czar's European territories are the Urals, which nowhere reach even the heights of the Apennines, which do not form everywhere a continuous chain, and which run in almost a straight line from north to south. From the icy pole the wind sweeping over the frozen ocean and the snowy wastes of the northern provinces finds nowhere a hindrance to its cruel blasts, and spreads its chill over the whole land with such steady keenness as to make the climate of the exposed parts of the Black Sea coast almost as wintry as that of the White Sea. At Odessa in the early days of October both our hotel and the private houses we had occasion to enter had

already put up double doors and windows, and people lived in apartments as hermetically closed as if their homes had been in St. Petersburg.

We slept at Baidar, a Tartar village, where a maiden of that Moslem race was the only attendant at the Russian inn, and on the morrow we drove in three hours to Sebastopol, a distance of forty-two versts.

Sebastopol has still not a little of that Pompeian look which it bore on the day after its surrender to the Western Allies in 1856. We drove through miles of ruins, the roofless walls staring at us from the dismantled doors and windows, the dust from the rubbish-heaps of brick and mortar blinding us at every turning of the streets, though, we were told, the city is looking up and thriving, and both house-rent and building-ground are rising in price from day to day.

We had to wait two days for the 'Olga,' detained by stress of weather, and it was with a hope of enlivening ourselves that, under the escort of the English Consul, a Crimean veteran who takes care of the heroic dead, and actually lives with as well as for them, we drove out to some of the eleven English cemeteries, to the house where Lord Raglan died, and the monument marking the spot where "the six hundred rode into the jaws of death"—those localities made for ever memorable by a war than which none was ever undertaken with less

distinct aims, none fought with greater valour, none brought to an end with less important results.

We left Sebastopol at three in the afternoon in the 'Olga,' and landed at Odessa in the morning at ten. Throughout the first week after our arrival, we never caught a single glimpse of the sun. Odessa, like Sebastopol, like Kertch, like Astrakhan, and other places lying on the edge of the Russian steppe, seems habitually, under the influence of the wind in peculiar quarters, to be haunted by fogs that set in at sunrise and only sometimes clear off after sunset. During this gloomy state of the atmosphere the night is usually warmer than the day.

Odessa has a population bordering on 200,000 inhabitants, and is thus in every respect the third city of the Empire. It has a magnificent position, for it lies high on ravines, which give it a wide command over its large harbour, lately improved, as well as on the open sea and coast, the striking feature of the place being its *boulevard*, a terrace or platform about 500 yards in length, laid out and planted as a promenade, looking out seawards and accessible by a flight of stairs of 150 steps from the landing-place.

Odessa is not an old town, but it looks brand-new, for there has been of late a great deal of building, and the crumbling nature of the stone keeps the mason and white-washer perpetually at work. It is lively, though

monotonous, for its broad, straight streets are astir with business, and the rattle of hackney-carriages, heavy-laden vans, and tramway-cars is incessant. It boasts many private palaces and has few public edifices, and in its municipal institutions it is, or used to be, taxed with consulting rather more the purposes of luxury and ornament than the real wants of the people or the interests of charity.

Odessa is in Russia, but not of Russia, for among its citizens, we are told, possibly with exaggeration, more than one-third (70,000) are Jews, besides 10,000 Greeks and Germans, and Italians in good number. It is unlike any other Russian city, for it is tolerably well paved, has plenty of drinking-water, and rows of trees—however stunted, wind-nipped, and sickly—in every street. It is not Russian, because few Russians succeed here in business; but strenuous efforts are made to Russify it, for the names of the streets, which were once written in Italian as well as in Russian, are now only set up in Russian, unreadable to most foreign visitors; and the so-called “Italian Street” (*Strada Italiana*), reminding one of what the town owes to its first settlers, has been rebaptized as “Pushkin Street.” Of the three French newspapers which flourished here till very lately, not one any longer exists, for whatever is not Russian is discountenanced and tabooed in a town which, in spite of all, is not, and never will be, Russian. French is,

nevertheless, more generally understood than in most Russian cities, but Italian is dying off here as in all the Levant and the north coast of Africa, Italy losing as a united nation such hold as she had as a mere nameless cluster of divided states.

It is difficult to foresee what results the great change that is visibly going on in the economical and commercial conditions of the Russian Empire may have on the destinies of Odessa.

Half a century ago, if we may trust the statistics of the *Journal d'Odessa*, this city had only the third rank among the commercial places of Russia. At the head of all then was St. Petersburg, whose harbour was frequented by 1500 to 2000 foreign vessels, the exports being 100 to 120 million roubles, and the imports 140 to 160 million roubles. Next in importance came Riga, with 1000 to 1500 vessels, 35 to 50 million roubles exports, and 15 to 20 million roubles imports; and Odessa, as third, received 600 to 800 vessels, her exports amounting to 25 to 30 million roubles, and her imports to 20 to 25 million roubles. The relative commercial importance of the three ports was, therefore, as 25 to 6 and 5.

Matters have undergone a considerable alteration since then. St. Petersburg, whose imports and exports doubled in amount those of all the other ports of the Empire put together, has been gradually declining, the

ports of Esthonia, Livonia, and Courland threatening to deprive her inconvenient harbour of a great part of the Baltic trade, and the centre of general business being rapidly removed from the present seat of Government to the old capital, Moscow. Riga, also, has been and is slowly sinking from its high position in the Baltic, and may, perhaps, eventually succumb to the active rivalry of Revel and Libau. Odessa, on the contrary, has been looking up for these many years, absorbing nearly all the Russian trade in the Black Sea, and rapidly rising from the third to the second rank as a seaport.

The main cause of the rise and progress of Odessa was owing to the development of agricultural enterprise in the provinces of what is called "Little" and "New Russia," or the "Black Earth Country"—the granary of the Empire and for a long time of all Europe.

Beyond the steppes which encompass the whole southern sea-coast of Russia, from the Sea of Azof to the Danube, there spreads far inland a fertile region, embracing the whole or part of the Governments of Podolia, Poltava, Kharkof, Kief, Voronei, Don Cossacks, &c., including the districts of what was once known as the "Ukraine," which was for many years debatable land between Poland, Turkey, and Russia, and on which roamed the mongrel bands of the Cossacks, an uncouth population recruited among the many tramps and vagabonds from the northern provinces, mixed with all the

racés of men with whom they came into contact, settling here and there in new, loose, and almost lawless communities, organized as military colonies, and perpetually shifting their allegiance from one to the other of these three Powers, till the policy and good fortune of Peter the Great and Catherine II. extended the sway of Russia over the whole territory.

At the close of the last century, and contemporaneously with the foundation of Odessa (1794), the bountiful nature of the soil of this region became known, and the country was overrun by colonists from "Great" or "Northern Russia," from Germany, and from Bulgaria and Wallachia; and its rich harvests were soon sufficient, not only to satisfy, but to exceed the wants of the whole Empire.

Odessa, endowed by its founder, Catherine II., with the privilege of a free port, which it enjoyed till after the war of the Crimea, monopolized during that time the export of the produce of this southern land, consisting chiefly of grain and wool; and its prosperity went on, always on the increase—affected only temporarily by wars and bad harvests—to such an extent that the total value of the exports, which was, in round numbers, about 52,000,000 roubles in 1871, rose to 86,000,000 roubles in 1878, to 88,000,000 roubles in 1879, and fell, owing to the bad harvest, to 56,000,000 roubles in 1880.

The Odessa trade was for a long time in the hands of Greek and Italian merchants, the original settlers in the town at its foundation, the produce being, before the invention of steamers, conveyed to Italy, France, and England in Italian bottoms. But, of late years, preference being given to steamers over sailing vessels, and the Italians, either failing to perceive the value of time and the importance of the revolution that steam had effected, or lacking capital to profit by it, allowed the English to have the lion's share of the Black Sea trade, so that, in 1879, the English vessels entering the port of Odessa were 549 steamers and four sailing vessels, with half-a-million of tons, while the Italians had only 50 steamers and 119 sailing vessels, with 85,700 tons. Next to the English were, in the same year, the Austrians (87 steam and 119 sailing vessels, 119,000 tons). The Russians, at home here, had 150 steam and eight sailing vessels and 180,000 tons.

Odessa, however, though she had so much of the trade to herself, had not of late years the whole of it.

As the means of land and water conveyance improved, and especially after the construction of railways, a number of minor rivals arose all along the coast—Rostov, at the mouth of the Don; Taganrog, Mariupol or Marianopolis, and Berdianski, on the north coast of the Sea of Azof, where Greek colonies are flourishing;

Kherson, at the mouth of the Dnieper; Nicolaief, at the mouth of the Bug; and others. Odessa was thus reduced to the trade of the region to the west of the last-named river, having lost that of the provinces of Poltava, Kharkof, Kursk, Orel, Ekaterinoslav, &c., and only retaining Kherson, Bessarabia, Volhynia, Kief, &c., which would still be sufficient for her commercial well-being.

But Odessa is threatened with a new and far more formidable rival in Sebastopol.

Sebastopol, with all its inlets, is by far the most perfect harbour in the Black Sea, and has the inestimable advantage that it never freezes, while in Odessa the ice brings all trade to a standstill for two or three weeks every winter, and all the ports of Azof and the mouths of the rivers are frozen from November to March or even mid-April. Sebastopol has the additional advantage of being in the most direct and nearest communication by rail with Kharkof, the very heart of the Black Earth Country, and with Moscow, the centre of the Russian commercial and industrial business.

The people in Sebastopol have hopes that the Imperial Government, giving up all thought of bringing back their great Black Sea naval station from Nicolaief to its former seat, may not be unwilling that their fine harbour be turned to the purposes of trading enterprise,

and even to favour it for a few years with the privileges of a free port.

The citizens of Odessa, on the other hand, scout such expectations as over-sanguine, if not quite chimerical, laugh to scorn the idea that the Government may at any time lay aside its intention of going back with its naval establishment to Sebastopol; and, in that case, they contend that the juxtaposition of a commercial with an Imperial naval port would be as monstrous a combination as would be in France that of Marseilles and Toulon, or in England that of Portsmouth and Liverpool, in one and the same place.

They add that the railway between Moscow and Sebastopol is ill-constructed and almost breaking down; that, although it is by some hundred miles shorter than that from Odessa to Moscow, the express and mail trains are so arranged that the most rapid communication between north and south is effected between Odessa and St. Petersburg, which route is travelled over in less than three days.

Whichever of the contending parties may have the best of the argument, there is no doubt that, were even the Government to be favourable to the wishes of the people of Sebastopol, there would be no just reason for jealousy between the two cities, for Odessa has already proved that she can manage to grow richer than ever upon one-half of the trade of Southern Russia, while

Sebastopol might safely rely on carrying on the other half—that other half which is now already in the hands of Taganrog, Mariupol, Nicolaief, &c. For all these ports of Azof and the mouths of the rivers, besides being closed by ice for at least four months in the year, are so shallow that no amount of dredging can keep back the silting sands, and vessels must anchor at distances of 10 to 20 and even 30 miles outside the harbours.

It must be observed that, although Russia has four longitudinal lines of railway from north to south, she is totally deficient in transversal lines; so that, for instance, to travel by rail from Odessa to Sebastopol, one must go all the way to Kharkof—a roundabout route more than six times the length of the direct distance. Were there wisdom and energy in this country or in its Government, such places as Rostof, Taganrog, Kherson, Nicolaief, and Odessa could be united by a circular line stretching from the Don to the Danube, using ferry-boats, where necessary, at the estuary of the rivers, and crossing at the most convenient points all the longitudinal lines, so as to direct the produce of each district to the port which might best suit all circumstances.

Unfortunately, there is here no initiative among the people, and the Government has little money in hand, and the little it has it squanders in fortifications at Kertch and the accumulation of heavy cannon at

Batoum; but, as to railways, it complains that the payment of subsidies to the guaranteed lines, hardly any of which pays, causes an expenditure which has risen this year from 47 to 53,000,000 of roubles.

The unsatisfactory condition of the Russian railways and their heavy freight are a terrible hindrance to the commercial enterprise of these southern ports, and the consequence is that trade will look for new outlets; and, as I before hinted, Königsberg in Prussia is already proving a formidable rival to Odessa.

For, although the distance from the centre of the Black Earth districts at Kief to Odessa is only 600 versts, while that from Kief to Königsberg is 900 versts, this difference is counterbalanced by the shorter sea voyage, and the much lower freights from Königsberg to England.

All things considered, there ought to be little cause for serious apprehension in Odessa, for the trade has long been in her hands, and could not be turned from its ordinary channel without such efforts as exceed the powers of all her competitors.

The trade of Odessa is in the hands of Jews, mostly Polish Jews, the most thoroughly despised and detested by the illiterate Russ. The Polish noblemen who owned large estates in the Black Earth districts, lived here till lately part of the year, attending both to the education of their children and to the business of their estate.

But they have gradually disappeared, and some of the wealthiest Israelites are now in possession of large tracts of land in these districts, which they cause to be cultivated for their own account, and of the export of the produce of which they have, of course, the monopoly. They are thus both landowners and merchants, and carry everything before them. Their wealth stirs up against them the hatred of all Russia, of high and low, of the officials of the Government, and even of the men at its head—an intense hatred, having its roots rather in envy than in religious antipathy or intolerance.

The Jews are charged with the most heinous offences, but the charges are vague, and reducible to no positive evidence. “They make their money by the most infamous practices,” we hear; “they lend money at an outrageously high rate of interest, and do not keep to their own shops or counting-houses, but prowl about the country like wolves, seeking the peasants they may devour, selling them liquors to encourage their drunken propensities, taking advantage of their distress to wrest from them deeds of mortgage, and urging them on the road to ruin, so as ultimately to drive them out of their homes and lands.”

All this is tantamount to saying that the Jews are usurers; and the question is, What are the dispositions of the Russian law about usury, whether it be practised by Hebrew or Gentile? Money, according to the notions

of our present age, is an article of trade like any other ; and as there is no Russian shopkeeper who will not ask at least twice as much as he expects to get for his wares, and who will not take it, too, without scruple if his customer is "ass enough to give it," so there is no legal reason why a Jew should not exact as high an interest for his money as any amount of lying and cheating (of course, within the law) can obtain.

Those who are so inveterate against the Jews should consider whether the best way of defeating their rapacity might not be to educate the peasantry, and, as is done in Germany, to open agricultural banks to which the boor in his difficulties might apply for a loan on what would be deemed Christian terms. For the rest, until we see some of the usurious Christian gamblers at the Stock Exchange brought to justice, we have little right to cry "Hep, hep, hep!" against the money-lenders of the House of Israel.*

Meanwhile, a far more serious danger than either the mutual ill-will between Jew and Christian, or the competition between Odessa and Sebastopol and any other port of the Empire, has arisen in our day from the other side of the Atlantic.

The American is underselling the Russian as a corn-grower and dealer. Both for the production and for the conveyance of cereals the Yankee finds that

* See the *P.S.* at the end of the chapter.

machinery can do the work of hundreds or thousands of men. Russia labours under the disadvantage of a scanty population, and with respect to steam-ploughs, threshing-engines, and elevators, she is still at the rudiments. After several seasons of a scarcity bordering on famine, there has been in Southern Russia this year a fair harvest, and, I am told, even better than people in their eagerness anticipated or proclaimed. There is plenty of grain ready for embarkation from the Russian harbours to the English markets. The Americans, on the contrary, are this year suffering from unusual scarcity; but will Russia, for all that, in ordinary years, and with average harvests, be able to stand the competition of American produce? As well might a sailing vessel be expected to outstrip a steamer. Modern ingenuity and the spirit of association have given the Cincinnati and Chicago smart men a start which has made them victorious over the earnest and patient, but plodding John Hodges of England. What will they not do to the detriment of Russia, a country not eminent as yet for ingenuity, thrift, or laborious energy?

The Russians flatter themselves that the success of the Americans is ephemeral; that it is owing to the disproportion between the scanty population of a new country and the measureless vastness of virgin soil open before them as a field for exertion on an

unprecedented scale. "But," say the Russians, "that population must increase and multiply, and that hitherto untouched soil must be exhausted, when the Americans will in their turn be weighted in the race, and Russians, as well as other people, will have their own chance, and things will find their just level."

Perhaps so. But what is to become of Russian industry and the Russian corn trade while all this may come to pass and a good time may come? What will become of the steed while the grass grows? A bad harvest in Illinois or Oregon may give the Russians a momentary relief; it may enable them to do a good stroke of business for a season or two. But will it cure the radical evil? Will they profit by a first ray of good fortune to place themselves in a position to fight the Americans with their own weapons, and so keep up the contest on equal terms?

These are all questions an answer to which must be sought in a thorough inquiry into the agricultural conditions of those Black Earth districts where corn is produced, and in the means of conveyance by which corn is brought to market.

January, 1882.

P.S.—The above was written towards the end of October, when it was thought that the persecutions of the Jews in various parts of Russia were at an end, and that we knew all there was to be said and thought about

that sorrowful subject. The subject, however, was again forcibly brought before the public by the publication in the *Times* of the 11th and 13th of this month of a long account of occurrences which had never before transpired, and which would have been deservedly designated as "Russian atrocities." On this most deplorable theme I, therefore, think it part of my duty to add the following observations.

When I was in St. Petersburg in July last, the tidings of the disorders occurring at that time in Odessa reached the capital and became the subject of general talk in its social circles. But all we heard at the time, and all I learnt about previous disturbances in the south of Russia, was that the populace had in those districts of the Russian Empire ill-treated, plundered, and beaten the Jews, following the example set to them by a far better educated and more enlightened people in Germany, and especially in the Prussian provinces, and in Berlin itself. This and nothing worse.

I travelled southward subsequently, and I heard nothing more about the "Persecution of the Jews" till I came to Odessa and Kief, where the facts there related to me by persons perfectly honest and neutral in the matter were written down by me without aggravation or extenuation, and amounted, in short, to a simple confirmation of what I had heard from the beginning.

The account in the *Times* now speaks of wholesale

murders, of violation of women, of deeds of great cruelty perpetrated against children. I have no right or wish to dispute the truth of the statement; I have not a word to say in defence of such horrid deeds; and as the first act of the mob seems to have been to break into the cellars, and brutify themselves by intoxication, there are, of course, no outrages that might not, under all circumstances, have been expected of them.

Neither do I think it relevant to the matter to point out the fact that the districts in which these atrocities were committed were either in Poland, or in those districts of southern and western Russia—Little Russia, New Russia, and White Russia—which, as we have seen, till within a century or little more belonged to Poland, and where the population was and remains rather Polish, or a mixture of other races than Russian.

A populace is a populace all the world over; but even in the face of the terrible narrative before us, I do not hesitate to assert that the Russian people, when sober and even when drunk, are one of the best-natured in the world, and especially that, with respect to outrages on women, they are the very last against whom the charge might be preferred.

But I find it less easy to explain the conduct of the Government.

In the first place, if the recital of these atrocious

deeds is true,* how is it that the full revelation of them has been for months withheld from the public? What are we to think of a Government having the power thus to hush them up, thus to gag the press, and stifle the voice of outraged opinion?

In the second place, even if we mistrusted the assertions that Government agents were sent out among the populace to stir up their evil passions, to justify and almost provoke their violence by a reference to the Emperor's acts and wishes;

Even if we disbelieved the statements that men high in authority, civil or military governors, refused to step in between the murderers and their victims, "not wishing to disturb their soldiers for a pack of Jews;"

Even if we deemed it impossible that men and officers belonging to the army or the police either remained passive spectators of the worst outrages or became participators in them;

Even if we make abstraction from all that, I say, it would be impossible to find words sufficiently severe to stigmatize the iniquitous proclamation or "Rescript" of

* A denial of the most startling assertions of the anonymous writer in the *Times* appeared in the official *Journal de St. Pétersbourg* since the above was written. But it amounted to a simple counter-statement. If the Russian Government is sure that the alleged ill-usage of women is pure invention, it should never rest till it had brought the author of such minutely detailed and individualized calumnies to justice. There is justice in England for nations as well as for newspaper writers.

September 3rd, in which, instead of denouncing the atrocities of the persecutors of the Jews, the Government takes the opportunity of enumerating the offences of the Jews themselves; thus palliating, if not actually sanctioning, any excesses that may be committed against them, and almost inciting the populace to run amuck against them; "*not to nail the Jew's ear to the pump.*"

And yet, after all, what are the alleged offences of the Jews?

"They have possessed themselves not only of every trade and business in all its branches, but also of great part of the land by buying or farming it.

"They have defrauded by their wiles the inhabitants, and particularly the poor inhabitants."

But the question is, or should be:

"Have the Jews broken the laws?"

"Do the laws allow either Jews or Christians to carry on illicit trades or criminal business?"

If the Jews have acted within the law they should have been lawfully protected. If their offences were of a nature not foreseen by the existing law, the law should have been altered. But in any case the first duty of the Government should have been to uphold the law against the persecuting populace, about whose unlawful proceedings there could be no doubt whatever; the greatest error or crime that can, in a civilized country, be laid to the charge of the Government

being that of allowing the subject to take the law into his own hand.

With respect to the main offences imputed to the Jews, that of being usurious money-lenders and keeping dram-shops, I can only repeat that the fault is not so much of the Jews' greed and knavery, as of the Christians' improvidence and intemperance. The peasants of Northern Russia, though there be no Jews among them, are no less addicted to drunkenness, and no less eaten up by debts and mortgages than the peasants of the Southern and Western districts; for there are—both North and South—plenty of Christians ready to lend on usury and to keep dram-shops.

There is nothing more certain than that the Jew—the peddling Jew—has no chance of thriving, except among people whom ignorance and unthrift deliver into his hands as easy victims.

One never hears of a Jew doing very good business among the canny Scotch; we have seen how little hope of success the Israelite has where he meets the equally subtle Armenian; and there is a saying in Italy that “it takes seven Jews to *do* a Genoese.”

It is not by banishing or exterminating the Jews that the Russian Government can hope to save its poor peasants, but by trying what education may do towards curing a people, to whom no one can deny many fine qualities, of those drunken, thriftless,

and vagrant habits which have always been their besetting sins.

There was a time when the Jews had the monopoly of the money-business of Europe, when kings and princes drew the teeth from a Hebrew's jaw to get at the ducats in his purse.

What happened? The Italians, Lombards, and Tuscans set up in competition. They ennobled the money-lending trade by creating banking business. They beat the Jew at his own weapons, and their name still lives in *Lombard Street* and *Boulevard des Italiens*; and men still write *L. s. d.* instead of *P. s. p.*

A good lesson, that, to Russian, German, and other Jew-baiters!

February, 1882.

The Consular Reports now laid before the Houses of Parliament confirm all foregoing assertions. Her Majesty's Representatives state, that the Jews in various localities of the Russian Empire have been plundered and ill-treated, but denounce the charges of murders and outrages upon women as pure invention.

CHAPTER XVIII.

ODESSA TO KIEF.

Nationalities in Russia—Great, Little, New and White Russia—The Black Earth Country—A Russo-Polish Estate—A Happy Household—South Russian Husbandry—Polish Revolutions—Their Consequences—Treatment of the Poles—Treatment of the Jews—Emancipation of the Serfs—Its Consequences.

THOUGH during my four months' tour through Russia I have never overstepped the Czar's dominions, I have not, for one-fourth of the time, been among pure Russians.

On the Baltic, in Finland, the people were Scandinavians, if not altogether by blood and language, at least by long-cherished traditions, by culture and habits, by their dearest hopes and aspirations.

In Esthonia, Livonia, and Courland — what the Russians more exclusively designate as their "Baltic Provinces"—the native races, which have nothing in common with the Russ, exhibit all the symptoms of a deeply-engrafted, far-advanced German civilization.

In St. Petersburg I found an amalgam of all

European nations, with little, if anything, in its trade, in its various social ranks, in the Court itself, that was not of alien birth, or, at least, descent.

On the Volga, Tartar, Kalmuck, and other Asiatic tribes mix everywhere with the crowds of the cities, and are still at home throughout a vast extent of the country.

In the Caucasus, what has been rescued from its savage tribes is either a desert, or is being seized by Armenians, everywhere superseding the less energetic and thrifty Georgians.

In the Crimea and the adjoining mainland, what has been taken from the Tartars belongs in a great measure to German, Bulgarian, Greek, and other settlers.

Odessa is a cosmopolitan commercial town, formerly Greek and Italian, now mainly Jewish.

Finally, between Odessa and Kief, I have been travelling through districts in which the Polish element preponderates.

Thus for three out of four months I might fancy myself anywhere rather than in Russia. According to Russian official statistics, on which the reader may put whatever reliance he thinks proper, the population of the Empire amounted at the last census, in 1872, to 86,952,347, which may at the present time have risen to 93,000,000. Of these 55,000,000, in round numbers, are assigned to the "ruling race," the East Slavs, divided

into "Great" and "Little" Russians. "Great Russia," or Russia proper, extends, says a recent traveller, "from the walls of Smolensk to the neighbourhood of Viatka, from the Gulf of Onega to the Cossack settlements on the Don. It covers an empire fifteen or sixteen times as large as France, the empire of Ivan the Terrible; that Russia which lay around the four ancient capitals—Novgorod the Great, Vladimir, Pskow, and Moscow." *

South of these boundaries, in Southern Russia, you have "Little Russia," the ancient Ukraine or borderland, Kief, Chernigoff, Poltava, Charkoff; and further south are the provinces of "New Russia," Bessarabia, Kherson, Tauris, or, as the Russians call it, "Taurida" (comprising the Crimea and the adjoining mainland), and Ekaterinoslaf. West of Little Russia, again, you have the "Black Earth Country," Podolia, Volhynia, and part of Kief. Further north are the provinces of Minsk, Grodno, Vilna, Vitepsk, Mohilef, belonging to White Russia.

Even in Great Russia the ruling race is thoroughly modified by the admixture of at least 3,000,000 Fins (exclusive of those in Finland) in the north, and of 2,500,000 Tartars in the east, the former rapidly blending with the Slavs, who crept in and squatted among rather than invaded or conquered them; the latter, as Mahommedans, resisting amalgamation with the Giaours

* 'Hepworth Dixon,' vol. II. chap. v.

in recent ages, but having left deep traces of their features and character among the Slavs, at the time of their all-sweeping inroads, at the end of which the Court, the army, and the nobility of the victorious Ivan the Terrible were more than half Tartarized; when the King and his Boyars kept their wives and daughters shut up in their harems, some of which, as I have stated, may still be seen in some odd wings of old Russian mansions; and they buried them in separate cemeteries, having apparently strong doubts about the immortality of the female soul; thus justifying the taunt of the old sneering Frenchman, which the Frenchified St. Petersburgers unreasonably resent, "*Grattez le Russe et vous trouvez le Tartare.*"

Even in what is called "Russia Proper," the population is, as everywhere in Europe (Scandinavia alone, perhaps, excepted), a mixture of various races, a Slavo-Finnish-Tartaric medley. But the amalgam is far more observable in the other divisions of European Russia; in Little Russia, where the mass of the people are Ruthenes, or Russines, long swayed over by the West Slavs, the Poles and Lithuanians, who still constitute the aristocracy of the land; and in New Russia, where the Tartars are still at home, at peace with Germans, Greeks, Roumanians, Bulgarians, and other colonists flourishing among them, while over both roam the Cossacks, the most hybrid of all races, exhibiting the features and

roughly adopting the habits and manners of the various peoples among whom their lot is cast ; nomads among Tartars, wasteful husbandmen in settled districts, wild marauding soldiers wherever and whenever a stroke of business in their old trade is allowed to them.

It was with a view to see something of Little Russia that I took the night train on the line from Odessa to Kief. I halted at a minor station in Podolia, about half-way between the two places, on a visit to a Polish nobleman to whom, I knew, visitors were never unwelcome.

We were met at the station by a very handsome brougham, drawn by four first-rate horses, in pairs—four-in-hand, not four abreast as I had hitherto seen everywhere in Russia—a brougham, because my host's mother-in-law had travelled in the same train under my protection, and an open conveyance would have been ill-suited to her age and sex.

It was six o'clock, the day just dawning, a dark November rather than October day. It had rained all night and the day before in the country, though in Odessa we had had only fog ; and on leaving the station we found the track a deep sea of mud. "The track," I say, for in Podolia and in the other districts of the Black Earth country, a "land flowing with milk and honey," there is no stone or other material wherewith a road can be made ; and the inhabitants have no choice in spring

or autumn but to splash in the mire and bump and thump over deep ruts, till winter and six feet of snow have mercy upon them and smooth their ways. Even with four of the best horses, a light weight, and a skilful driver, we were very nearly an hour in getting over the three versts that lay between the station and our host's mansion.

Our host was up to receive us at his usual hour, 7 A.M.—a middle-aged, middle-sized man, a happy man, who, with his brother, had married two sisters, and who, with that adaptability of temperament which characterizes almost all Continental people, in contrast with the English, evidently saw nothing formidable in the prospect of a half-year's domestication of his mother-in-law under his roof.

An hour later we sat down to morning coffee at a large table with our host and hostess; the fine old lady, my travelling companion; two blooming girls of twelve and eleven, and two other little girls, three years old, born twins, and as wonderfully like one another as if they had come out of a good fairy's hands. The only son, eldest of the family, was at college in Warsaw, but his tutor, with the tutor's wife, were here, as well as an English governess and the nobleman's secretary and steward—the little court of a by no means too princely household, where all difference of rank seemed amiably set aside, and where every one knew his place.

The house was a plain one-story building, in thorough repair, not unpicturesque on the outside, stately and comfortable in its inner apartments, down in a hollow between rising grounds, and under their shelter, with a fine well-trimmed garden and lawn sloping down to an artificial lake, with orchards and strips of wood here and there on the hill-sides; a snug home, the ideal of comfort and affluence, able to rely for its supplies on an estate of 3000 dessiatines, something less than 9000 acres of the best land in the world, half of it arable land; a land yielding, even with the present system of cultivation, 10 to 12 roubles per dessiatine, or a total income of 30,000 to 36,000 roubles, which, even at the present low rate of exchange, make a sum of £3000 to £3600 of our money—a decent fortune, independently of any revenue accruing, for aught I knew, to the proprietor from other sources.

I looked at our kind host, and the blooming household round the table, and the rich furniture and well-appointed service, and the surrounding grounds all blushing with their autumn-tinged foliage, and I perfectly understood how, in spite of the long, dreary winter, the months of impassable roads, and the inaccessible neighbourhood, the owner of all that could love and live on the spot from year's end to year's end, and look round on the fair domain and exult in the consciousness of being lord of all he surveyed, regretting at the most

that he could not take it with him whenever and wherever he went.

And I gazed at the fairy twins, whom I envied to the father and valued above all his other worldly possessions, almost grieving at the thought that they would have to grow up ; as if I had not seen and known in my life several specimens of the daughters of Eve, going through all the periods of girlhood, or maidenhood, and even of motherhood or grandmotherhood, and yet preserving throughout it all the graces, the tenderness, the purity, and innocence—and I might almost say, all the beauty—of infancy, remaining to the end just such darling angels as these were.

Our host's estate, although one of the best-managed and most profitable, is by no means the largest in Podolia, Volhynia, or Kief, the provinces to which the designation of " Black Earth Region " is more generally applied.

There are some properties averaging 12,000 to 15,000 dessiatines ; and some few, though of late the tendency has been to subdivision, are still twice and three times the last-named extent.

A fair price of land at the sale of an estate of 3000 dessiatines, including forest, pasturage, gardens, dwelling-house, and farm-buildings, would be at the rate of 100 to 120 roubles per dessiatine, something like 300,000 to 360,000 roubles (£3000 to £3600). In

cases of expropriation for railways or other works of public utility, 150 roubles per dessiatine has been often awarded. The best land, which, as we have seen, in a careful owner's hands yields 10 to 12 roubles per dessiatine, if let to a peasant will not pay more than five or six roubles rent.

The price of land in these semi-Polish provinces has been for many years affected by political rather than by economical causes.

On the occurrence of the Polish insurrection of 1863 the nobles of Podolia and all the seven provinces bordering on Poland and Lithuania were suspected of harbouring strong sympathies with their brethren of Warsaw and the kingdom of Poland—a suspicion which may have been well grounded in some few cases, but hardly with respect to the majority of these landowners, who, as aristocrats, could feel little inclination towards a revolution which from an early period had hoisted a red flag and aimed at the establishment of an ultra-Democratic Republic. Guilty or innocent, however, these Polish noblemen paid the penalty of the hare-brained attempt of the rebels in the kingdom. The Government proceeded to the imprisonment, transportation, and proscription of several of them, and to the confiscation of their property, ending by a decree that neither a Pole, nor a Catholic, nor a Jew should be allowed to buy landed property in any of these Black

Earth provinces—a decree which, I am told, is still in force.

The result of this tyrannical measure, for it affected many persons against whom no charge had been brought or no guilt proved, was to lower the price of the lots of the confiscated land or of any other land that was brought to the hammer, most of the wealthy natives labouring under legal disabilities to come forth as bidders, and the land thus often falling to purchasers from Great Russia, in many instances to those very Government officials who had laboured at the promulgation or execution of the iniquitous decree.

As a Nemesis or Providential retribution, these outside purchasers, little valuing the land which they had obtained for an old song, and, as absentees not knowing how to turn it to good purpose, accustomed also to indulge in that profligate lavishness which is characteristic of a Russian when extraordinary good luck befriends him, ran headlong into debt, and so heavily mortgaged their ill-gotten estates that nearly the bulk of them is now virtually the property of Jewish money-lenders from Kief or Odessa, many of whom lay claim to the harvest while it is still unripened in the field. Honest Polish owners and unrighteous Russian usurpers, together with the besotted peasants, are thus in many instances equally ruined, and the Jews are profiting both by the misfortunes or by the evil doings of the upper classes, as

well as by the incurable sloth and drunkenness of the lower.

No wonder in such circumstances if popular wrath can be easily kindled against these Israelites ; no wonder if, this last summer, both here, at Odessa and elsewhere, the populace broke into the Jews' shops, pillaged and destroyed some of their houses, ill-treating and cudgeling those few who were too slow to fly from their insane fury.

Those among the populace who were looked upon as the most notorious offenders, yet who had, fortunately, spared their victims' lives, were soon thrown into gaol by hundreds, and summarily punished with exile to Siberia. Order has thus been sufficiently re-established to embolden most of the Jews to show their faces again in their old haunts and to resume their usual business ; but the hostile feeling against them, however unreasonable, has not abated, and the same effects may at any moment spring from the same causes.

The ill-will against the sons of Israel is so strong that both at Odessa and here I have been advised by persons whom education ought to place above prejudice to choose the Friday night or Saturday morning for my railway journeys—that night and morning being the only time in the week in which, owing to the Mosaic Sabbath, the trains are not

crowded with "those cursed, ill-smelling, insolent Jews." *

Were it not for these social disorders, arising from the deplorable insanity of the people and their rulers, what a land of promise this Black Earth zone would be for the human race!

Such soil as I have seen nearly all along the route to and from the station near my Polish friend's estate and beyond, is not to be found anywhere in the world, unless it be in Terra di Lavoro, between Capua and Caserta, the ancient Campania Felix, or in some of the deepest alluvial bottoms in the Lombard or Emilian provinces, or, finally, in some of the forcing-beds which an English kitchen-gardener saturates with the richest manure. Unfortunately, the land cannot be said to be even half-cultivated. There is here not the slightest attempt at protecting the field by any kind of fence, hedge, or wall. All lies open to the ravages of stray cattle and the pilfering of the passers-by.

By a strange oversight, which it would be rash to impute to deliberate malice, at the time of the emancipation of the serfs in 1861 the Imperial decree was so

* The above was written about the end of October. At that time I was assured by persons whom I had every reason to look upon as perfectly impartial, that no human being had been killed, though several Jews had been beaten both at Kief and Odessa, while of outrages to women there was not even a suspicion. See on this subject the P.S. to Chapter XVII.

CHAPTER XIX.

KIEF.

The Russian Granary—State of Agriculture—Emancipation of Serfs—Its Consequences—Condition of the Peasantry—Scarcity of Labour—Its Causes—Condition of the Landowners—Agricultural Statistics—American Competition—The Black Earth Region—Character of its Population—Kief—Its Site—Its Buildings—Its People.

I LEFT the hospitable roof of my Polish friend at four in the morning to be in time for the only train that would take me on my further journey to Kief.

I was deeply impressed with my host's tale of the difficulties he had to contend with as a landowner ; and, on taking stock of good and evil, I came to the conclusion that, in spite of his brimful cup of domestic bliss, his position in life was not altogether as enviable as it had at first appeared.

The ownership of land is a burden to any one except either to a peasant proprietor who possesses just as much of it as he can till with his own hand, or to a landowner who has not more than he can find labour for on mutually free and equitable terms.

I have already in previous chapters given reasons why, on the one hand, peasant proprietorship must needs break down everywhere, and especially in Russia; and, on the other hand, why in Russia the mutual relations between landowner and labourer have been so abruptly and inconsiderately disturbed by the manner of the emancipation of the serfs as to render any scheme of future plausible arrangement almost impracticable.

I think, however, it may be advisable to sum up the whole argument, as the subject is doubtless of the greatest importance in the Russian Empire, and affects all its economical interests.

The emancipation of the serfs in Russia was a measure of necessity, loudly and inexorably called for upon every principle of common justice and humanity. But it could scarcely have been devised or carried out with less regard to the economical conditions of the country or with less provident consideration of the interests of the landowners or of the peasants themselves.

In the first place, the serfs, though nominally enfranchised, were not actually free, but simply exchanged the rule of their masters for that of the commune to which they belonged.

In the second place, the land of which they enjoyed the usufruct in their former servile state did not become their individual property, but is possessed collectively by the commune, which allots to each man his own

in most instances, enabled to meet its liabilities ; but the great drawback still remains that the man able and willing to work must bear the burden of the man either unable or unwilling. How long a society, large or small, may be kept together on such terms is a question which Democratic politicians should be called upon to answer.

It must also be observed that the commune takes upon itself to renew the distribution of the shares of the common land allotted to its members at stated times, usually every three years.

This redistribution is made upon the principle of universal suffrage and by the will of the majority. Were every man animated by feelings of justice and inaccessible to instincts of self-interest, the claims of every member would be duly considered, and no one would be deprived of the lot on which he might have bestowed his utmost care, improving it by thorough tillage and liberal manuring, unless he were allotted a new share assuring him of equal advantages.

But here, again, the decision rests with the majority, and what guarantee have we that this majority will consist of righteous and unselfish men who will mete to every member with fair measure, and that those who have neglected for three years and impoverished their own lots may not, by the sheer noise of their voices, manage to palm those worthless lots upon their

thrifty neighbours, and secure their neighbours' improved lots for themselves ?

Or, indeed, what guarantee have we that all the members of the community, looking forward to a redistribution which may deprive them of the fruits of their industry and allow others to reap the benefit of it, will bestow any other care upon the culture of their lots than what may answer their immediate purposes from year to year ? Does not every provision in the Emancipation Act seem calculated to paralyze all exertion and throw obstacles in the way of agricultural progress ? Does it not supply excuses for the peasant's idleness and indolence, and remove every stimulus of thirst for gain, love of independence, and honourable ambition ? Does it not establish society on the principle that the bees must toil for the drones, or, as the Italians have it, that "*Chi fila ha una camicia, e chi non fila ne ha due ?*"

The results of the ill-contrived emancipation of the serfs, and of the application of the communal system to these southern districts, where it was hardly known and where it could not be expected to work as beneficially as in the provinces of Great Russia, in which it sprang up spontaneously, seemed to me very evident at every step.

The villages I crossed were a mass of squalor and misery ; the men, women, and children, barefooted and

less than half-clad, trudging deeply in the mire after their lean cattle, and their ill-thatched mud cabins being as much a home for swine and geese as for the villagers themselves ; while nothing could be more striking than the contrast between their patches of clumsily-scratched, weedy land and the neatly-furrowed and thoroughly clean fields of the landlord.

The peasant's cultivation, be it observed, is limited to the sowing of rye, potatoes, and a few kitchen vegetables, which supply their staple food, it seldom happening that the labourer or his family have fresh meat, or, indeed, any meat, save salt pork, more than once or twice in the year. To the production of wheat or other produce on which the wealth of the country depends for its main exports the peasants' lots do not contribute one pennyworth.

Indeed, the emancipated Russian serf, however contented he may be with his own lot, is as useless for the welfare of the Empire as the negro freedman of the West Indies squatting under his banana or cocoa-tree grove. It is much to expect that he will work for himself ; but it is perfectly idle to look for any argument that will induce him to work at the same time for the common weal.

On the other hand, the landlord, deprived of the power of compelling his former thrall's assistance, has to struggle against that scarcity of labour which is the subject of universal complaint throughout Russia.

The only profitable produce in this part of the country is wheat and other grain and beet-root sugar; in some other provinces more to the east, tobacco.

The labourer's ordinary wages are from 40 to 50 copecks (1s. to 1s. 3d.) daily; but at harvest-time, or when the field is to be dug for beet-root, the landlord finds it extremely difficult to procure labourers even at two or three roubles a day (5s. to 7s. 6d.), and he declares that he would rather pay that high wage to one efficient labourer than to four such lazy hounds as he can muster in the neighbourhood.

Of the northern peasants, who, as I was told, were yearly flocking from their comparatively barren lands to these fertile southern fields, hardly any make their appearance, if we except carpenters and other mechanics, who, however useful in their several capacities, are of no avail whatever as field-hands.

The distress for reapers and ploughmen has waxed so great that the Government has had to come to the landowner's rescue by allowing the soldiers quartered in these garrisons to lend their hands at the rate of one rouble daily for each man, their employer having to feast and entertain the officers over the bargain. But although as many as 50,000 men from the ranks have thus been told off in the province of Podolia alone to make themselves useful on a better ground than the

battle-field, the supply of labour is still woefully inadequate to the demand.

The crying evil in Russia, be it remembered, is, and will be, Heaven knows for how long, its scanty population; and the main causes which prevent its growth are—1st, the fearful mortality among the children in tender age (40 per cent. before the age of five); and 2nd, the forced barrenness of the women.

The women, especially of the peasant class, usually marry late in life—not “till they have hardened their bones for their husband’s work”—and they are crushed by unconscionable hard toil both in their girlhood and wifehood. Here, as in Germany, a good helpmate is expected by her lord to be “as strong as a mule,” and her mulish strength is not spared even while she should be entitled to the tenderest care.

With respect to the children, those of the lower order, especially in the country, suffer from exposure to the cruel climate, partly owing to the boor’s conceit that it is well the weakling should perish, and only the hardy survive, but in a great measure from that dire necessity which bids poverty sink or swim.

But even among the well-to-do people the children’s constitution is tampered with and vitiated from the cradle by injudicious coddling and cottoning. For the nursery, as we all know, is an exclusively English institution, and the children throughout the Continent,

Germany, perhaps, excepted, are sacrificed to their parents' blind fondness, being made to share the meals, to keep the late hours, and join in the talk of grown-up people, as much detriment arising from the unsuitable diet as from the unnatural precocity of their mental development.

Hence nowhere does one see so many pale, thin, and puny, as well as knowing children of the upper classes, as throughout the Czar's dominions; nowhere do so many succumb to the treatment.

But, setting aside the training of children in private families, for what concerns those of the lower classes we need only quote what Murray's 'Handbook' has to tell us respecting the condition of the Foundling Hospitals of St. Petersburg and Moscow; for after lavishing the highest praises on the vastness and munificence of those public charities, after enumerating the 13,000 inmates harboured in the establishment of the present, and the 29,000 provided for in that of the former, capital—the 'Handbook' concludes that "the mortality among the children is very great" (432 in 1000), and yet that "too many of these illegitimate infants are saved at the expense of the lawful offspring of the nurses, left at that critical age to be brought up by hand in the villages."

So little is the Russ fit to govern human beings even in the earliest stage of their existence!

But to return to our subject.

To make up for the scarcity of labour, the landowners in these Black Earth districts have recourse to machinery, and at an agricultural show I visited a few days ago at Odessa, I found a large quantity of first-rate implements, ploughs and harrows, steam-threshing-machines, &c., for the most part supplied by two or three English warehouses established in the city, and in some instances, clumsily imitated by native manufacturers. But several obstacles arise against any very extensive use of such articles in these districts: in the first place, from want of capital on the part of the landowners, most of whom are utterly ruined and eaten up by the Jews; in the second place, from the immense distances between the landed estates and the large cities, and the total absence in the few villages and the minor towns of workmen able to repair any machinery that might happen to fall out of gear, and which would thus become altogether useless. With respect to the cultivation of beet-root sugar, another serious difficulty is found in the high price of fuel, most of the available forests in the south having been cut down, and the coal mines, which, if you listen to the Russians, are innumerable, ubiquitous, inexhaustible, and could yield "better coal than the best at Newcastle," seldom finding as yet solid companies to work them. From these and other causes the beet-root sugar, though these provinces produce 130,000,000 poods of beet-root, is not yet an

article of considerable export; and indeed Russia still imports sugar from her neighbours.

The real wealth of the country, it is needless to repeat, springs from the exportation of cereals, of which Russia produced, in the year 1874, a quantity exceeding by 555,000,000 hectolitres what she needed for home consumption.

In that same year Russia sent to Europe, and especially to England, grain to the value of 212,000,000 roubles; and that was more than half the total amount of her exports, these being, in that year, 411,000,000 roubles, against 440,000,000 roubles of imports.

Of the 555,000,000 hectolitres of grain that Russia, as I said, was able to spare that year, 198,000,000 hectolitres were rye, the staple produce of the northern provinces.

But the wheat—buck-wheat and winter-wheat—is almost exclusively cultivated in these southern districts, and the yield, in that year, rose to 113,000,000 hectolitres, with an additional amount of 241,000,000 hectolitres of oats, barley, maize, and other grain.

The year 1874 was an extraordinarily bountiful one; but people have as much to say of the present season of 1881-2, when the harvest has realized the most sanguine anticipations of the producers. The wheat has been sold and is selling at a highly remunerative price, and the quantity that is being shipped off from

Russia to the English and other markets will certainly meet any possible demand.

On the other hand, America had in this same season almost no harvest; the tables have been for once decidedly turned against her, and the *prestige* of her formidable power as a producer of bread has in some measure abated. The expectation also, that she would find it easy to keep up the competition by the enormous stores which she was supposed to have heaped up in her granaries from the harvests of former years has not as yet been realized.

America this year is hitherto "nowhere," and Russia is in possession of the field.

But whatever may be the state of the markets this year, it is owing to a combination of fortuitous circumstances which can have little, if any, influence on future transactions.

There can be no doubt in the mind of sane persons in Russia, that unless the country proceeds with an energy of which it has hitherto never shown itself capable, to improve both its means of production and communication, it will have to run the race with its competitors most grievously weighted and trammelled.

A landowner here has, as we have seen, no means of conveying his wheat from his field or barn to the railway-station, unless over roads that are absolutely impracticable, except during the few months, sledge-

driving weather in the winter ; the distance between his estate and the nearest station is in many cases hundreds of kilomètres ; and the slow rate of travelling on the railways is as serious a hindrance as the enormity of their charges.

Railways in this country, whether they are the work of the Government or of companies bound to it by the terms of their contract, have invariably been constructed in obedience to strategical purposes, without the least consideration of commercial and agricultural interests.

Elevators are still only projected in Russia ; the wheat has to be shovelled into sacks and carried on men's backs from the barn to the cart, from the cart to the railway-truck, from the truck to the ship's-hold ; so that it is no exaggeration to assert that the conveyance of the produce before it is on board causes an outlay exceeding the original price at which the producer can afford to sell it.

The difficulties the trade has to contend with owing to the shallow waters of most of the harbours of the Sea of Azof and the Black Sea, where it must still be embarked, have already been explained at full length in the foregoing chapter.

All engrossed with her ambitious schemes of territorial aggrandizement, and only anxious about the development of her land and sea forces, Russia has suffered her trading institutions to lag behind those

of the most primitive nations, and it seems difficult to foresee, in the sad state of the Imperial Treasury and the shattered condition of so many private fortunes, how she may be capable of such strenuous exertions as would enable her to make up for lost time.

And yet, when all is said, no one will deny that Russia is a rich country, that she may rely on a variety of inexhaustible resources, and that she need not live on bread or wheat alone. She has her mines, her flax, hemp, wool, furs, and tallow; above all things, her Moscow cloth, linen, and cotton-mills, her Tula cutlery, her 11,810 manufactories of every description, by which she seems determined to make herself independent of foreign supplies. But it would be matter for regret if the well-being of the industrial North had to be promoted by a system which should prove injurious to the agricultural South; if these Black Earth districts should fall from their former prosperity, victims of those protective duties on which Russian economists have pinned their faith.

These Black Earth districts are not only naturally the richest, they are also the pleasantest land within the whole extent of the Czar's domains.

The whole surface of Russia is not so uniformly flat as it appears on the map. Here and there it stretches out in broad waves, heaving up into heights almost attaining the dignity of real hills. This is especially

the case in the south, where, along the watercourses, the Dnieper, the Bug, and the Pripet, the hills break down into steep ravines, which, robed in the luxuriant verdure of their young woods, impart a picturesque aspect to the towns or villages coquettishly peeping down from their crests.

There are many of the river cities of Russia enjoying a fine position, but that of Kief is decidedly the finest.

I had made up my mind not to leave Russia without seeing it, for I thought there must be something in a spot on which men settled in remote periods, and to which they stuck throughout all after ages; a spot where a town was not founded, but grew up spontaneously as a tree, its first inhabitants having chosen it from a sheer instinctive consciousness of its capabilities. For Kief is one of the oldest cities in Russia, only, perhaps, not so old as Novgorod the Great, but, on the other hand, not so far fallen from her former splendour.

Kief was the Holy City, the cradle of Russian Christianity, several hundred years before Moscow was dreamt of. Its saints are revered in all Russian churches; its shrines are crowded with pilgrims from all Russian provinces.

And yet, though its name is associated with the most ancient traditions of Russian annals, Kief ceased at one time to be a Russian town, and centuries elapsed before it was re-annexed to the Czar's territories.

With all the rest of Russia, Kief fell a prey to the Tartar invaders in the thirteenth century; but it was rescued from them by Godymin, Grand Duke of Lithuania, and became a dependency of that Grand Duchy in 1320. It was then, with it, united to the Kingdom of Poland, together with a large portion of this southern region, in 1386. Kief was thus Polish till 1686, when, after long wars between Russia and Poland, these two States agreed upon fixing their boundary at the Dnieper; when the city of Kief, though lying on the right bank of that river, was made over to Russia, with all the districts of Little Russia. But Podolia, Volhynia, and all the Black Earth continued to be Polish till the second partition of the kingdom in 1793, when all that had so long been debatable land was at last surrendered to Russia.

The character of the people, both in town and country, could not fail to be modified by so long an association with Poland; and Kief, as the head and heart of the whole region, may be said to be Polish at the present day, the people having comparatively little of the indolence and slovenliness of the Northern Russian, and differing from him, not only in manners and feelings and in language, but also in personal appearance, as the Western Slavs were never so permanently overwhelmed by the Tartar tide, and were consequently not so deeply marked with the Tartar mark as their northern and eastern brethren.

There are pretty faces of women to be met in the streets of Kief, of that European type of which one loses sight at St. Petersburg and Moscow.

I have, after all, seen little of the place, for during my ten days' stay here we had nothing but dark clouds clinging to the earth, with frequent rain, and the first flakes of snow, never allowing us a sight of sun or star.

But I clambered up to the Church of St. Andrew—an elegant building designed by an Italian architect—to the clumsy monument of Vladimir, the Baptizer of Russia, and other high grounds from which I could survey whatever was not hid by the heavy pall of the worse than autumnal fog.

The town is built on a cluster of hills, on the brow of their ravines, and in the depth of the glens, fretted by little streams out of them; a scattered city rambling up and down on no intelligible plan, with a fine long, broad street of hotels and shops, nearly level, running all across it, and a labyrinth of hilly roads leading to some one or other of the golden-domed churches with which the hills are crowned.

From any vantage-ground on the heights you see the broad Dnieper at your feet, spanned over by its two long bridges, and beyond it the boundless plain of Chernigoff, all seamed by the meandering branches of the river, which in spring turn all that level region into a sea. It is the site of Nijni Novgorod and other cities

on the Volga all over again ; but the panorama at Kief possesses the charm of greater variety : for the city in the rear presents a series of pictures of hill and dell agreeably contrasting with the morass-like wilderness of the plain in front.

I have not seen much of the marvels of the place, except the old Cathedral of St. Sophia, dating back from the tenth century, and the Lavra, the most ancient of Russian monasteries, with its catacombs and mummied saints ; but a traveller coming from Moscow has already had enough of Russian priests and their relics and icons, their tinsel and frippery, to last for a lifetime.

Kief is a flourishing town. Its position, which was perhaps originally recommended to its people by its strength, gives it its importance as the trading centre of a wealthy agricultural region. Her population now borders on 140,000, and was, perhaps, not greater in its palmier days.

The Russians and those who accept their statements are apt to exaggerate whatever has come down as tradition respecting the greatness and glory of their country in pre-Tartaric epochs.

The author of 'Free Russia,' who dealt with history as a poet, and delighted in nothing that was not paradox and crotchet, has found out that Novgorod the Great, which has now sunk to the rank of a fourth-rate Russian town with 18,000 inhabitants, numbered in

olden times a population of 800,000 ; that it was “ one of the largest cities of Europe, a republic older than Florence, a capital larger than London ; ” and that when it fell under the displeasure of Ivan the Terrible, who sent his Tartars to ravage it and lay it in ruins in 1570, “ the tale of murdered men, women, and children was found to be greater than the population of St. Petersburg at the present day.”

No doubt Mr. Hepworth Dixon may have had some authority for all these superlative assertions. Novgorod was in the Middle Ages undoubtedly a great city, and the catastrophe to which she succumbed was certainly appalling. But the round numbers which he quotes from the Chronicles are certainly given in the *Messer Milione* style. It is hardly likely that he himself seriously believed what he wrote, or expected any reader to believe it.

Perhaps, there was equal rashness in the adjective which he applied to this country in his title-page. For assuredly Russia was no more “ free ” at the time of his visit than it may be said to be at this moment.

CHAPTER XX.

KIEF TO WARSAW.

Recapitulation and Conclusion—Cohesion and Vitality of the Russian Empire—The Ruling People—Russian Peasantry—Serfs and Freedmen—Peasant Proprietors—Results of Emancipation—Local Self-Government—Autocracy and Autonomy—Stability of Imperialism—Absence of Revolutionary Elements—Underground Machination—Autocracy and Nihilism—The Present Administration—Count Ignatieff—Necessity of a Responsible Government—Expediency of Decentralisation—Vastness and Weakness of Russia—In her Internal Organisation—In her Foreign Relations and Enterprises.

THE various statements occurring in the foregoing chapters of this work were based on a rapid but conscientious observation of Russian men and things. My intention in this last chapter is to sum up all that goes before, so as to draw the subject to a consistent and obvious conclusion.

The reader who may have had patience to follow me throughout the reflections suggested at the various stages of my undertaking, will easily be able to decide whether the present recapitulation implies a contradiction, or contains a confirmation, of the preceding

assertions ; and I hope it will be evident that on mature consideration my estimate of Russia and the Russians at my journey's end is still in the main the same as I formed from the beginning.

The Russian Empire, in my opinion, possesses all the elements of vitality and cohesion ; for it has a sufficiently strong and preponderant dominant race ; and the conquered people, though not very warmly attached to their conquerors, have yet common interests with them of sufficient importance to make them cling to the union for their very existence. None of them are sufficiently powerful in themselves for independence ; none could hope to better their condition by transferring their allegiance from Russia to any of Russia's neighbours.

The dominant race, the people of Russia proper, are the most docile and self-denying, the most governable of human beings ; and they are, in a great measure, self-governing. But one class of them, the peasantry, had three centuries ago to be made serfs for their own good ; to cure them of their vagrant habits, which were the result partly of the admixture of Tartar blood in their composition ; but partly, also, of the insecurity into which the country had been thrown by many years of Tartar outrage and devastation.

It was deemed expedient to bind the labourer to the soil which he tilled, paying him for the field he

cultivated for his master by the enjoyment of the field he cultivated for himself. But this dependence of the land-labourer on the landowner was too nearly akin to slavery, and too liable to abuses, to be tolerated in a European State; and from the beginning of the present century it was felt that serfdom had done its work, and that the termination of the system had become an urgent necessity.

Unfortunately, the emancipation of the serfs was undertaken by a well-meaning but not strong-minded Sovereign, a kind of Russian Pio Nono, who, in this and other measures of liberal reform, consulted nothing but his benevolent intentions, never reckoned the consequence of his own acts, but followed his impulse in haste often to repent it at leisure.

It seemed to the Emperor Alexander II. a good policy, by a mere scratch of the pen to emancipate the serfs (22,000,000 in number, without reckoning as many "State peasants"), not only converting them into free peasants, but also into peasant proprietors, owners of the land which had been the wages of their bondage.

The freedom of the peasant, however, and his ownership of the land are incomplete and indeed illusory; for he is still bound to the village or commune of which his land compels him to be a member; and of this land—with the exception of his cottage and strip of garden which are his in perpetuity—he has not the free and

permanent possession, but merely the temporary and heavily-taxed usufruct. A village in Russia is the *beau idéal* of an autonomous association, governing itself on the basis of ultra-democratic equality and universal suffrage. Possibly the majority in such a community does not very frequently abuse its power, but it is certainly not submitted to any legal or social control; for the Government never meddles with it unless the general Imperial interests are at stake; and there is neither Press nor any organized opinion to safeguard the rights or to redress the wrongs of the minority.*

* "A majority of peasants, meeting in a barn, or even in a whisky-shop, can fine and flog their fellows beyond appeal: some rights have been taken from these village Republicans in recent years; they are not allowed, as in former years, to lay the lash on women; and though they can sentence a man to twenty blows, they may not club him to death. Yet two-thirds of a village mob, in which every voter may be drunk, can pass a vote which may have the effect of sending a man to Siberia for the term of his life.

"Since the edict put an end to the open flogging of women, the men have been forced to invent new modes of punishing their wives, as they fancy that a private beating does little good, because it carries no shame. A news-sheet gives the following as a sample: 'Euphrosine M——, a peasant woman, living in the Province of Kherson, is accused by her husband of unfaithfulness. The rustic calls a meeting of the patriarchs, who hears his story, and without hearing the woman in her defence, condemn her to walk through the village stark-naked, in broad daylight, and in the presence of all her friends. That sentence is executed on a frosty day: her guilt is not proved, yet she has no appeal from the decision of that village-court.'"—Hepworth Dixon's *New Russia*, vol. ii. chap. iv. v.

These may be extreme cases, but not much better could be expected from "Patriarchal Life" and "Village Republics" in Russia or in any country.

Nothing can be more conclusive as to the good temper and amiable disposition of the Russian peasantry than their submission to the *Mir* or village government—a system enforcing a surrender of all individual rights, either in person or property. This indeed is the price that the serfs have to pay for their emancipation. For the compensation due to their former owners, or to the State which advanced the ransom money, the commune is responsible; and it is, therefore, empowered to levy on each and all of its members whatever money is needed, taking care that the share which each has to bear of the common burdens should be proportionate to his share of the common property.

The system is specious, and could only work plausibly if the population of a village remained stationary; if every lot were sufficient for the wants of each family; if every family and every member of it were equally sober, industrious, and thrifty, and if the triennial redistribution of the lots were always made on fair and equitable terms; in other words, if every man were perfect, and if the majority never abused its unlimited power.

But even under the most favourable circumstances, and admitting that every Russian village were a Utopia, there would always remain the stubborn fact that the freed peasant is still as efficiently bound to the soil as he was in his servile condition under his landlord; and

that he must pay for his land in money as much as he paid in labour, if not more.

In some of the provinces where the soil is fertile, enough may, perhaps, be made out of the common land to meet the common liabilities; but in poorer districts it is necessary to eke out the revenue proceeding from the land, by allowing some of the members of the commune to go forth and "better themselves," by seeking employment in any capacity which will enable them, not only to bear their share of the burdens of the commune, but also to benefit the commune by paying a percentage of their extra earnings.

This leave of absence for the good of the estate was as usually granted by the landlord as it is now by the commune; and so much of the fruit of his toil as an able and willing serf had formerly to yield to his master, an intelligent and laborious freedman has now to contribute to make up for the shortcomings of his idle fellow-villagers. The transition has been from a paternal feudalism to a brotherly communism.

Practically, however, the peasant takes more liberty than the Emancipation was meant to award him. The emigration of the land-labourers from the country to the town, and from the poorer to the richer districts, is incessant, and assumes every day more alarming proportions. As pilgrims, as harvest-men, as pedlars, or simply as runaways, a large proportion of the

rural population of Russia is perpetually on the tramp.

The numerous manufactories of every description that a protective system of customs duties has called into existence, have a tendency to crowd the city at the expense of the country, in spite of the hindrance of the passport regulations and of the control that both the commune and the police are supposed to exercise on the movements of all Russian subjects. The result is already that "about one million and a quarter of peasants habitually live in the towns." *

But if even in this period of transition and probation the rural population of Russia are already showing a disposition to go back to those habits of vagrancy of which serfdom itself had only partially cured them, what may be expected of them when their freedom becomes a reality, when their ransom is either fully paid or condoned as may become inevitable, and as the Government has been for some time contemplating; and when the main, if not the only, tie which bound the individual to the commune—the duty of co-operating in the payment of the common debt—shall be happily dissolved? Will not this lead to the disruption or transformation of the commune? Will not every man stand up for himself? Will he not claim permanent possession of the field that is allotted to him, and insist on reaping

* Wallace, *Russia*, chap. ix. p. 146.

the benefits of any care he may have bestowed upon it?

And if even, after all his efforts to improve it, the land does not sufficiently requite his labour, or if he hopes to find elsewhere either another soil or another employment more profitable, what means will there be to prevent his looking for better fortune, either by a change of climate or a change of trade?

All considered, it seems to me that the Russian peasantry have only been freed from their condition of serfs to go back to their former condition of vagrants.

The soil of Great Russia is not altogether irreclaimably barren. On the contrary, large tracts of it may be made wondrously fruitful; but it would require a careful, assiduous, and expensive cultivation, and the Russian rustic, if left to himself, has neither the intelligence, nor the energy, nor the capital needful to do his land justice. Under the old servile system the peasant was merely the body of the estate; the functions of the mind were well or ill discharged by the landlord. But the Emancipation Act has either ruined or driven from their mansions many of the landlords. Capital is scarce, and what little there is gives better returns if invested in the Funds or ventured on industrial and commercial speculation than if applied to the promotion of agricultural interests.

The gradual, yet rapid, depopulation of the lands of the northern and eastern provinces and the migration of their peasantry to the mines of the Ural, to the cotton or woollen mills of the central, or to the Black Earth of the southern districts, seems to me already an incontrovertible fact—a fact pregnant with grave significance at the present moment, and perhaps fraught with even more serious consequences for the future.

For Great Russia—*i. e.* North and East Russia—is, after all, what may properly be called Russia ; it is the core and kernel, the strength and substance of the Empire, and anything that weakens it must necessarily tend to the general enfeeblement of the Empire itself. It may seem natural to suppose that this exodus of the dominant race from its native stronghold, and its spread and diffusion among the people of the more recently-annexed territories, ought to have the effect of influencing and winning, of assimilating and absorbing, and, in one word, of Russifying these latter. But this could only be the case if the migration resulted from a redundancy of vitality, a plethora of ill-distributed wealth, and a surplus population. But Great Russia sends forth her children, whom she can ill spare, from sheer unthrift and improvidence. The Russian boor is driven from home less by his own than by the country's poverty. He leaves behind him a gap that there is no one to fill up. The blood that flows from the heart and leaves

it cold is too thin and scanty to fill up the veins and infuse life at the extremities.

Beyond the boundaries of Russia proper there are vast zones of conquered territories, inhabited by mixed, half-subdued races — Finlanders and Germans of the Baltic provinces in the north-west; Tartars in the east and south-east, from the Volga, all across the Asiatic continent; Tartars and other half-tamed, half-civilized tribes in the south, in the Caucasus, and the Crimea; finally, Poles, Ruthenes, Lithuanians, and other south-Slavic or alien races in the south-west, in Little and New Russia, or in the west, in White Russia and in the former kingdom of Poland.

In all these territories and among these various nationalities Russia can scarcely be considered as thoroughly at home; the subject people are held in check, here by long habits of submission, there by considerations of common interest, everywhere by the consciousness of their own weakness and of the irresistible material preponderance of the ruling race; yet all, or most of them, are cherishing local traditions and aspirations, resenting and, passively at least, resisting intrusion, encroachment, and any attempt at amalgamation, smarting under the sense of unmerited defeat and intolerable oppression, and harbouring unfriendly or even implacably hostile feelings against their conquerors.

In no European State is the need of a strong

and wise Government more deeply felt than in the Russian Empire, and nowhere, perhaps, are the rulers of the land more helplessly and hopelessly bewildered; nowhere are the people on whom the State relies for its stability more deplorably disorganized and disheartened.

The Government of Russia was based on the principle of autocracy. There was no other law than the will of the Czar, so far as it reached; but beyond it in the *Mir*, or Village Commune, or in the *Zemstvo*, or Local Government, consisting of an aggregate of Communes in a *Canton* or district, and of Cantons in a *Volost* or Department, as well as in the Municipal Councils of the cities, and the Senates of the Provinces, the rudiments of an ill-defined, but unlimited, popular Government have been lately introduced. Wherever the good pleasure of the Emperor and the lawful or unlawful gains and perquisites of the formidable host of his administration are not interfered with, Russian subjects are allowed to manage their own affairs at their discretion, appointing their local authorities upon the basis of universal suffrage, and in the interests of an all-leveling, democratic equality.

That the Emperor was not all-seeing, omniscient, or omnipotent; that the administration was a mass of corruption, and the municipal organization vitiated by bribery at its electoral sources, and at the best

incapable and inactive, were all undeniable truths, universally proclaimed and admitted.

And, indeed, ignorance, corruption, lack of zeal or ability are evils in some degree inseparable from all government, absolute or representative. But the special evil in Russia consisted in a vain attempt to reconcile representative institutions with irresistible absolutism, without at the same time fixing the limits between the sovereign power and the popular rights. Self-government was given to the Russians, not as a control upon, but as an auxiliary to, the Administration.

The Commune was empowered to assess and collect, provided it paid the taxes. The management of the street pavements, of the sewers, of the lighting of a city was left to its corporation; but on the laws or their execution, on the general interests of the State, none of these local bodies had a voice, none were consulted; and even in mere local matters they never came into collision with the civil and military governors, with the police, or other agents of the central power, without being worsted in the conflict and bidden to hold their tongue.

But it is everywhere easier to overpower corporate opposition than to smother public opinion. The Press in Russia, though gagged and worried by arbitrary censorship, has developed of late years very great activity. The emancipation of the serfs, the opening of the law

courts, and other liberal measures with which the humanitarian Emperor Alexander II. inaugurated his reign, gave rise to expectations which he was not free, even if he had been really willing, to fulfil. The new era of freedom and well-being to which sanguine patriots looked forward turned out a delusion, and the darkness of Russian discontent was deepened by the mere glimpse of deceitful light which had momentarily flashed through the gloom.

Discontent in Russia never was, never could be very general, very loud, very bold, or active.

Even men of the educated classes in that country are mere theorists, utopists in politics. They are singularly wanting in originality of thought, and incapable of initiative of action. They lack the power of creation, and are ashamed of those imitative faculties which have made them whatever they are.

From their almost servile dependency on foreign ideas they have fallen into an overweening conceit of their own abilities. They are satisfied that they know best what suits their country; they believe they are on the track of some grand discovery, on the eve of some all-important change, at the dawn of some new day that is to make Russia the greatest, as it is the largest, State in the world.

But as to any definition of the policy on which that State ought to be based, as to the means by which this

change ought to be effected, they have nothing to say. The present system they think cannot last ; the discontent is too general and well-grounded ; the people's patience is tried past all endurance. Yet the remedy, they add, is not to be sought in violence. The country is not prepared, not fit for insurrectionary movements. The sovereign power is too firmly established ; autocracy too sacred in the people's eyes ; the lower classes when roused, too savage and brutal—and they instance the horrors of the *Jacqueries* of the Cossack rebel chiefs, Stenka Razin in 1669, and Pugatcheff in 1773—finally, they point to the military organization of the Empire, too solid, too vast, too far-reaching, for any faction to try conclusion with it.

The Nihilists seem to entertain different views. In their opinion nothing is more practicable, nothing simpler and easier than a Russian revolution ; and the means by which they hope to achieve it is—assassination.

Who these Nihilists are no man can tell ; nor how numerous they are, to what class of men they belong, of what means they dispose ; what chiefs they look up to, where they have their head-quarters. Their work is underground, like the mole's. Their existence is unsuspected till they break out at the surface.

They—*i. e.* some of them—made repeated attempts against the life of the Emperor Alexander II., and they ultimately obtained their intent. The actual perpetrators

of the horrible deed have been taken red-handed; the police have found the traces of some of their accomplices; sentence has been passed and carried into execution against several of them.

Have they all been found out and secured? Have the chiefs been reached, and is the whole conspiracy broken, dispersed, disheartened? To all these questions no direct answer is given; but the uneasiness among the people, and the feverish activity of the Government, seem to point to a general conviction that Nihilism has not spoken its last word.

Indeed, Nihilism never speaks, but acts.

It has been described by some of its professed disciples as "a social democratic conspiracy, plotting the subversion of all civil and social order, determined to leave nothing standing of what exists."

As yet, however, its main blows have been or are aimed at the head of the State. It was not the person of the late Czar, and not that of the present one, that was or is obnoxious to the Nihilists. It was the system. The war is waged against autocracy; and the mischief is that the system is summed up in one person. The Nihilists seem determined not to desist from their murderous attempts till such change is effected in the Government as will give them satisfaction. How many Emperors will have to be taken off before Imperialism gives up the struggle?

There may be much or their may be little ; there may be everything or nothing in the pretensions of this tenebrous association which has hitherto only been made known to the world by the deeds of a few profligate malefactors ; but the demoralization into which it has plunged the Imperial Government, the mixture of sore dismay and eager expectation it has raised among the people, must be looked upon as tantamount to a chronic revolution.

Nothing could be more fatal to the prestige of the Monarchic principle than the incessant terror evinced by the Emperor or by the persons responsible for his safety ; nothing more undignified than the pitiful shifts and dodges by which the Sovereign is made to play hide-and-seek with his subjects ; nothing more improvident than this tacit acknowledgment of the ubiquity, the imminence, and irresistibility of an invisible, intangible enemy.

It is no one's fault but the Government's if this Nihilist bugbear assume such colossal proportions in the people's imagination ; if it be allowed to perpetuate the country's alarm, paralyze the action, and compromise the ascendancy of constituted authority.

Can the Government do no better ? Can they devise nothing nobler for the safety of their Emperor's person than a panoply of clumsy precautions which have proved so signally unavailing in his father's case ? Can they not

make him invulnerable by proclaiming him irresponsible? Sooner than fear should compel him to abdicate, let reason induce him to depute his power. Let him take rank among the sovereigns who can do no wrong, and he will incur no danger.

It is time that the Czar and his advisers should convince themselves that autocracy even in Russia has outlived its time. It is only four years since Mr. Wallace, the writer who has given so much of his time to the study of Russia and the Russians, declared that "never was the autocratic power in Russia stronger or more secure than at the present moment."* Secure against its people, perhaps, but not against its own fears. To allay those fears something must be done; something that will satisfy, not Nihilist assassins, but those long-deferred hopes and baffled aspirations which have made an autocrat's assassination in Russia a possibility.

"Some people declare that autocracy in Russia has lost its power, and that the Czar, like despotic rulers in general, must periodically go to war in order to avert the attention of his subjects from home politics. All these suppositions are utterly false; Russian autocracy, founded on the unbounded hereditary devotion of the people—peasantry and nobles alike—cannot for a moment be compared with French autocracy in the time of Napoleon III., and never was the autocratic power of Russia stronger or more secure than at the present moment."—Wallace, *Russia*, chap. xxxiv. p. 608. This was written or at least published in 1877. It is almost the last conclusion to which the distinguished author came as he wound up his views of Russia. What would he think now of the strength and security of Russian autocracy?—(February 1882).

Has the present Prime Minister done anything tending to the furtherance of these objects? Or does he intend doing anything?

I found Count Ignatieff in St. Petersburg, last July, soon after his accession to power, and people then already reckoned on his fall as inevitable and imminent. Again and again since then his resignation has been not only predicted as a probable contingency, but even positively announced as an accomplished fact. But all such reports were unfounded; no such forecasts were realized.

I do not know whether the Count is to be congratulated on his prolonged tenure of office. If a combination of all talents, and especially of all the fascinating talents of a diplomatist, could fit a man for the task he has in hand, Ignatieff might be the man; but such a task requires actual genius, and the peculiar genius of a statesman; and from the beginning, before the experiment was tried, I frankly expressed my conviction that Ignatieff was not the right man in the right place. Neither the Count's military education, nor his diplomatic experience, would avail him at the head of a Cabinet. He had neither the thorough knowledge of his country, nor the practice of the ordinary routine of business, nor the insight into the nature and tendencies of modern institutions, nor the faith, hope, and charity which should make him look upon man as an indefinitely

improvable being—nothing, in short, of what should befit a Home Minister under any circumstances; and he has not the stern independence and inflexibility of character that would at the present crisis enable a real statesman to step between the Sovereign and the people, and impose upon both of them the terms of a compact based on just mutual concessions,—a *modus vivendi* suitable to them both as rational and responsible beings.

Count Ignatieff was in my opinion perfectly justified, when he came into office, in sneering at a constitution *à la Midhat*, or *à la Melikoff*; but from the very fact that he set aside his predecessor's programme, the world inferred that he had a scheme of his own. Yet what he has done hitherto has been merely to appoint commissions, to harass the Press, and to play bo-peeps with the Nihilists. Perhaps his plans are not yet mature. I have heard people say that nothing of importance can be attempted before the Emperor's coronation. But, all the same, I think Count Ignatieff would be better pleased, as well as more sure of success, if he were trusted with the management of Foreign Affairs, that line of business in which he had done, and would always do, his country the most signal services.

But whether it be with Ignatieff or with any other man that the ruling of Russia's destinies is henceforth to rest, one thing seems very clear—that the days of autocracy are numbered.

Nihilism will never be strong enough to give pitched battles to autocracy ; but it has proved its ability to bring autocracy to mortal duels. So long as the fate of a country hangs on the thread of a man's life, it will always be at the mercy of any one, be he hero or maniac or desperate villain, determined to give life for life.

But with something like good-will and earnest purpose, it ought not to be impossible even in Russia to usher in a new system, and turn over a new leaf.

Ministers there are, then why not a Ministry ? Why not a united, responsible Cabinet, which should bare its breast, and bid the assassin's dagger strike at it, and spare the sacred person of a "reigning not ruling" Sovereign ?

Russia has her Communes, Cantons, and Volosts ; her Municipal Councils, her Provincial Senates ; why should they be, as a Russian print justly designates them, "mere puppet-shows without serious meaning" ? Why should they not have rights well defined by law—indisputable, inviolable, placed above the arbitrary will of the Emperor, his bureaucracy and his police ?

Russia has her Baltic provinces of Esthonia, Livonia, and Courland, her Grand Duchy of Finland, with orders and institutions of their own. Where is there a better State fitted for a thorough decentralization and local autonomy ? Why should not the principle of personal unity, of many states under one crown—the grand

original idea of Roman Imperialism founded on Municipalism,—that system, which, although partial and limited, works tolerably well in Austria-Hungary, and still better in Norway-Sweden, be as successfully applied to a vaster country and a more divided people than either of those dual Monarchies—applied on a larger scale and on a more comprehensive plan?

I have made the tour of most Russian dependencies, have visited people more or less recently incorporated with the Empire, races various in blood, in faith, in language, in social progress, but I have found nowhere, save, perhaps, here among the Poles, either implacable hatred against the Russians or irresistible longing for independence.

There is in Russia, as in all great empires, a cohesive strength, a force of gravitation, arising from a community of vast material interests, that, as a rule, under good management, soon gets the better of local pride and national antipathy. The Russian subjects in non-Russian districts do not grudge their allegiance to the Emperor, nor did they expect that they could better their condition either by isolation or by annexation to other Powers. They simply resent as unfair and unnatural all attempts at Russification; they stand up for their language, their creed, their laws and usages, their traditional individuality. They, above all things, resist, as

uncalled-for and needless and mischievous, all interference of the Imperial administration, of the police, of the military authorities, with what they consider absolutely local and separate affairs.

But only let self-government in every village, town, or province be a reality; let the various divisions of the Empire be assured of as large an extent of autonomy as may really be good for them—such autonomy as is now still maintained in the countries on the Baltic, or as was allowed to the Polish kingdom before its final extinction in 1868—and when all the members of the colossal body have obtained their utmost natural development, it will be found that vitality will flow more spontaneously to the heart—to that Imperial Government and Council of “All the Russias” which would have to provide for the general welfare and rule the common destinies.

Unfortunately, the tendency of the Imperial Government has hitherto always been in the contrary direction. They were bent on making of their world-wide Empire a kind of Juggernaut car, expecting it to assimilate all it trod down and crushed. They valued every conquest not for its intrinsic worth, but for any use they could put it to as a stepping-stone to further conquests. They gave their foreign policy an undue preponderance over all matters of mere home interest. They trained a

large school of crafty diplomatists, but provided little or no instruction for able administrators. They made all their peaceful institutions subservient to the exigencies of their war establishment, introducing even the ranks and titles of military organization into every branch of Civil Service. They relied for internal order on that same array of bayonets which was to open their way to foreign conquest.

They made of their people an armed nation—an army ; and what respect for local rights, instincts, or aspirations could be expected of an autocracy determined to turn the country into a barrack ?

But even in their foreign transactions, even in their warlike enterprises, Russian rulers were hampered by the baneful influence of their artificial and improvident domestic system.

It seems wisely and happily ordained by nature that whatever is very big should also be clumsy and unwieldy. Strong as geography makes her for self-defence, and indisputably excellent as is the stuff of her soldiers, and distinguished the genius of many of her generals, Russia can boast of no very signal exploits as an aggressive power. All her conquests, beginning with the Great Peter's victory at Poltava, have been the result, not of superior valour, but of dogged perseverance and appalling sacrifices. Even in her latest

conflict with Turkey, with a worn-out, bankrupt, and despised adversary, and in spite of the undeniable heroism and devotion of her soldiers, Russia has been indebted for her success to fearful odds, to her overwhelming numerical superiority.

And, after all, what success? With all her agents' cunning, what reason has she to applaud herself on her diplomatic triumphs? Prince Bismarck had his heel on France's neck in 1871, and he glared round like a lion on all the Powers of Europe, daring any of them to step between him and his helpless prey. Russia had Turkey on the hip in 1878, and she had to go to Berlin at the bidding of the same Prince Bismarck and there discharge the main bulk of the booty she flattered herself she had secured at San Stefano.

Therein we see all the difference between a straightforward policy basing its demands on right backed by might, and a diplomacy overreaching itself by too implicit a reliance on the mere shifts of adroit duplicity and chicane.

Russia has been blundering for centuries to find her way to the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles, and now her progress to those straits is obstructed by Austria—Austria backed, or rather driven, against her will on that race to Constantinople which may lose her Vienna, or dismember the whole Empire.

No doubt Russia has been somewhat more successful on the side of Asia, where she hopes to reach the shores of the Persian Gulf. But what would it avail her to obtain that intent? What profit has she now of her possessions all across the continent of Asia and of her fine harbours near the mouth of the Amoor? With the mercantile marine she has now, or is ever likely to have, Russia can hardly ever aspire to be more than a second or third-rate naval Power, and against the development of her maritime commerce she has not merely political but insurmountable natural obstacles to contend with—enormous distances, frozen oceans, a scanty population, irreclaimably barren solitudes.

What avails it to her to be twenty times larger than Germany, if she has barely twice her neighbour's population; if she has hardly the revenue of France, or the yearly exports of Italy; if she can scarcely boast three or four times the mileage of railways of Belgium, or as important a money market as that of Holland?

For her internal welfare, for her pacific intercourse with her neighbours and the interchange of commodities, both her position and the progress of modern invention have sufficiently provided. If her railways, her roads, her harbours are in a backward state, if the wealth of her mines is in a great measure unproductive and almost unexplored, if the harvest of her rich Black Earth dis-

tricts cannot withstand American competition, Russia must feel that she has only herself to blame.

In spite of the drawbacks of a large part of her soil and climate nature has done enough for Russia's well-being. There is not much fault to be found with the country, and much less with the people. Even the greatest inconvenience with which the Empire has to struggle—the scantiness of population—is the result of social more than of natural causes—of the crushing hard work to which the women are doomed, of the cruel exposure of the children of the poor in tender age, and especially in those charitable institutions which take upon themselves the charge of vicarious maternity.

At the end of my four months' visit I am about to leave Russia with the same feelings of sympathy and good-will with which I entered it. I wish for the welfare of this great country, and have full faith in it. I think, at least, that the country has been and is advancing at a prodigiously rapid rate in spite of the shortcomings of the Government, and I hardly dare say how much further its prosperity might be carried by rulers who should give it a chance, who should better inquire into its wants and satisfy its wishes; rulers who should give the country peace and at least partial disarmament and a reasonable amount of freedom, self-government, and sound education; who should equally

consult the interests of every branch of trade and industry on the principle of an elevated commercial and economical policy ; who should base sovereign authority on the people's strong instincts and loyalty, and should not suffer their devotional feelings to be misled by the arts of a corrupt and tyrannical priesthood.

THE END.

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